

Sermons Preached by the Rev. Raymond Shaheen, D. D.

| <u>1956- continued</u> | <u>SERMON TITLE</u> | <u>TEXT</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| September 23 | "Prisoner's Plea" | Ephesians 4: 1 |
| September 30 | "The Second Commandments" | |
| October 28 | "The True Protestant" | |
| November 11 | "By Faith's Light Touch" | Matthew 9: 21-22 |
| November 18 | "How Do You Say Thank You To God?" | |
| December 2 | "The Coming Christ" | Collect of the Day |
| December 9 | "The Coming Christ" | Collect of the Day |
| December 16 | "The Coming Christ" | Collect of the Day |
| December 23 | "The Redeeming Christ" | Collect of the Day |

SERMONS - 1956
Pastor Shaheen

SAINT LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

SERMONS

Pastor Shaheen

1956

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| January , 1956 | " | |
| February 5, 1956 | "WHEN GOD SPEAKS PERSON TO PERSON" | Luke 4:18 |
| February 12, 1956 | "A BETTER BOON THAN ALMS" | Luke 18:41 |
| February 19, 1956 | "A STUDY OF NAMES - <u>Disciple</u> " | Matt. 10:1-15 |
| February 26, 1956 | "A STUDY OF NAMES - <u>Believer</u> " | Acts 5:12-28 |
| March 4, 1956 | "A STUDY OF NAMES - <u>Friend</u> " | John 15:1-16 |
| March 11, 1956 | "A STUDY OF NAMES - <u>Witness</u> " | Luke 24:36-48 |
| March 18, 1956 | "A STUDY OF NAMES - <u>Christian</u> " | Acts 11:19-26 |
| March 25, 1956 | (Palm Sunday) | |
| April 15, 1956 | | |
| April 22, 1956 | "PILGRIMS AND STRANGERS" | |
| April 29, 1956 | | John 16:5-7 |
| May 6, 1956 | | James 1:27 |
| May 13, 1956 | | |
| May 20, 1956 | (Pentecost) | |
| June 10, 1956 | | |
| July 8, 1956 | | Luke 16:24 |
| September 2, 1956 | | Matt. 13:55 |
| September 9, 1956 | "TODAY AND TOMORROW" | Matt. 6:34 |
| September 16, 1956 | "THE INNER MAN" | Eph. 3:16 |
| September 23, 1956 | "PRISONER'S PLEA" | Eph. 4:1 |
| September 30, 1956 | "THE SECOND COMMANDMENT" | |

Sermons - 1956
Pastor Shaheen

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|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| October 28, 1956 | "THE TRUE PROTESTANT" (Reformation Sunday) | |
| November 11, 1956 | "BY FAITH'S LIGHT TOUCH" | Matt. 9:21-22 |
| November 18, 1956 | "HOW DO YOU SAY THANK YOU TO GOD?" | |
| December 2, 1956 | "THE COMING CHRIST" | Collect of the Day |
| December 9, 1956 | "THE COMING CHRIST" | Collect of the Day |
| December 16, 1956 | "THE COMING CHRIST" | Collect of the Day |
| December 23, 1956 | "THE REDEEMING CHRIST" | Collect of the Day |

ST. LUKE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Silver Spring, Maryland

January 29, 1956

The text is the twenty-second verse of the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew - "And then Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

Pilate is every man and every man is Pilate and, like Pilate, soon or late, we find ourselves confronted by important questions. And, like Pilate, we may be prone to give consideration to the secondary phase of a primary question. "What shall I do with Jesus?" So asked Pontius Pilate. But Pilate was interested only in the secondary phase of the matter. "How can I get rid of this man? How can I ease myself out of this situation?" That was the thing that concerned Pontius Pilate.

Life has a way of thrusting before us these important questions. Some of the primary questions that face us are these. Well, go with me now while I wait outside the hospital room and with members of the family we are anxiously awaiting the doctor's return. "Doctor, will she get well? How long does she have to live?" That's an important question but it could be that for a moment we might concern ourselves with the secondary phase--simply a matter of return to health. The basic and the important thing might be, "If she becomes better, will she serve her Lord with greater zeal and devotion out of gratitude for mercy so received?"

Here is another important question--"What shall I do with my life?" God has a way of giving to each of us a measure of talent, and personality is a unique thing. "With what God has given to me, what shall I do; what profession, what vocation?" That could be for some people a primary question but if they do not watch out, they may concern themselves with a secondary phase. But the

primary aspect of this primary question is, "What will I become by what I shall do?"

But whatever the questions that may come to you, I submit to you this morning as I stand for the first time at this sacred desk there is no question as important as this: "What will you do with Jesus Christ?" You know, of course you know, there are three possible answers. One of them is, "I'll get rid of Him." The Pharisee, the Saducee, and all who have followed in their way have been men of that mentality. But those who have answered in that way are not confined to a Judean hill and two thousand years ago. When Dr. Paul Hoh was the esteemed president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Mount Airy, he received from a friend of his, who was taking a pilgrimage to Europe, a mailing tube and with the tube came a letter. "Dear Paul: I want you to look at this as though you were seeing it for the first time. Try to get the impressions that I got when my eyes fell upon it when it was posted against a wall in a small European village in a certain country." Dr. Hoh with his imaginative mind took the poster from the mailing tube and then placed it, keeping his eyes as inadvertently as he could from the poster, against the wall in his study and then walked back and then looked at it as though he were looking at it for the first time. This is what he saw. A huge man, tall and gaunt and muscular, with arms outstretched, hands clutching the arms of a wheelbarrow, and the man and the wheelbarrow were headed for the refuse heap, and Dr. Hoh confesses that his immediate reaction was this: "Ah, this is good. Here's a man who has found something undesirable and he wants to get rid of it and so he is heading toward the refuse heap". But imagine Dr. Hoh's reaction when his eyes fell next upon the wheelbarrow's cargo--the weak, emaciated form of a man and across the man's body these words were roughly printed: Jesus Christus. This man, this poster typified a philosophy and a group of people in a certain section of the world who, having been encountered by Jesus Christ, said "We will get rid of Him". There are those who act and think that way today.

The second category of those who having been encountered by Jesus Christ must make up their mind are those who say, "We will not make up our mind; decisively, that is. For the time being we will evade it. We are perfectly content to allow Jesus Christ to go His way; we want to go ours. We won't disturb Him and what is more, we wouldn't think of allowing Him to disturb us." The story of the thief is typical of that group. He had heard about Jesus Christ; he had read about Him in a book, he had seen the lovely temples that people build to His honor, he had seen the procession of the faithful, but he was perfectly content that they should go their way. He was willing to allow Jesus Christ to be in the world but he would not become a follower. The thief of whom I now speak enters a certain room in a certain house, about to commit an act of thievery and with his flashlight looking now for the place where the precious jewels are stored. Suddenly his light is focused upon a small statue of Jesus Christ in a tiny niche in the wall. With that peculiar mentality that was his, somehow he cannot commit the act of robbery in the presence of Jesus Christ, so he goes to the little statue and he turns it about and allows the face of Jesus Christ to confront a blank wall, and he goes now and commits his thievery with the back of Jesus Christ to him. It's a parable, my friends, it's a parable; typical of so many. "You look your way, Jesus Christ; let me go about my little life in my own way." It could be that most people, being encountered by Jesus Christ, may unwittingly find themselves in that category.

And as you know, of course, there is always the third group. Being encountered by Jesus Christ they say, as they behold in Him something the like of which they have never seen before,

"O Jesus, loveliest and most loving One,
How can I choose but love Thee, God's dear son.
Were there no Heaven to gain, no Hell to flee,
For what Thou art alone, I must love Thee."

Peter, John, Paul, Augustine, John Wesley, Martin Luther, the humble St. Francis of Assisi, the pastors who have shepherd this flock in the past, the faithful

souls in Saint Luke church from the very beginning to this very day--they are the ones who having been encountered by Jesus Christ say, "We will follow Him, we will love Him, we will serve Him." There is no greater moment in a man's life than when he gives the great assent to Jesus Christ.

Once I had that indescribable joy to walk the narrow streets of Nazareth and if there are those here--lads, young men in this congregation now--I want you to know that I thought of you, even though I did not know your name, I thought of every boy when I went to Nazareth, for Nazareth is essentially a boys' town, rather precious because of the footsteps of the boy Jesus Christ. And I said to myself, "I should like to visit a carpenter shop," and I stood by the door of a carpenter shop in Nazareth and I tried to recall as best I could a scene that I would like to have experienced when it happened; that day when Jesus Christ, the carpenter's son, went to the carpenter's bench and for the last time put there the hammer and the saw and the plane and the adze and turned His back on the carpenter bench and then went to the open doorway, never again to return to the carpenter shop, and then He faced the great wide world to whom now He would come as God's great Gallilean. Legend has it that as He stood there you could read upon the lines of His face the words of His heart, as He braced Himself with outstretched arms against the doorway, and the question that concerns Him now is, "What will they do with me when I go to them?" And the setting sun casts its rays against the outstretched arms of the tall gallant Gallilean and the shadow of the cross was formed upon the floor of the carpenter shop, the question of questions upon His mind, "What will they do with me," and that's the question that comes to every man, "What will you do with Jesus Christ?"

Unhesitatingly I lay bare my soul in your presence. As the question comes repeatedly in any man's life, my most recent answer is this: "Jesus Christ, I will follow You--to Saint Luke Church in Silver Spring." And there is one

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thing that I've wanted to tell you. And I am giving you fair warning, my friend in Christ, in whatever time we may have together as pastor and people, when by the grace of God I shall stand by your side in poverty or prosperity, in peace or in pain, ^{in joy or sorrow} in the changing conditions and circumstances of life, in whatever situation you may find yourself, as your pastor and as your friend, I shall be in duty bound to whisper spiritually into your ear, "What now, in the face of this thing, will you do with Jesus Christ?"

Raymond Shaheen

ST. LUKE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Silver Spring, Maryland

February 5, 1956

The title of this morning's sermon is When God Speaks Person to Person.

The text is a portion of the eighteenth verse of the fourth chapter of Luke -
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . ."

You know how it happened, don't you? Let me remind you quickly. Word had spread like wildfire that the carpenter's son was coming back to His home town. He had been away now for some time. He had chosen to become an itinerant preacher. He had turned His back on the carpenter's shop. The weeks, the months and the years of separation had nonetheless still kept a holy place back in Nazareth for the carpenter's son. There were those who remembered Him; how could they forget Him? And when the people came to attend the 9 o'clock service on the Sabbath day on this certain occasion in the synagogue in Nazareth, they found more than the usual number of people present. Curiosity, you see, had taken hold in their hearts.

Ah, He had come to the synagogue before; but now when He comes, He comes as the itinerant preacher, He comes as the local one who had made good beyond the town of Nazareth. It could be that He might speak, so they milled round about the doors of the synagogue. It was filled inside and if you would have listened closely, chances are you would have heard talk like this: "Ah, yes; there He is. I'd know Him anywhere. Didn't He take my son Isaac and didn't they climb yonder hilltop to watch the sunset night after night? Sure, I'd know Him. There He is. He worked with Joseph when they made for me the yoke for my oxen. Sure, I remember Him. He hasn't changed too much. That is He. There He is at the end."

The service was started in the usual manner. There was the prayer, there was the chanting of at least eighteen different prayers, the reading of a Psalm,

and then at a particular moment in the service the presiding Elder stood up and said--he must have spoken words like these--,"We are honored to have in our midst this morning Joseph's son, Jesu; you remember Him. This is not the first time that He has come to this place. He was always here when He lived among us. He loved this very place. But this morning He comes back to us after some absence. There isn't a single one among us who has not heard the favorable reports. They tell us that He's a marvelous preacher. They tell us that He performs miracles. Jesu, would you kindly come forward now and we would be pleased, we would be honored if you would read the lessons for this service."

That was a gracious gesture that was quite frequently offered distinguished people in the synagogue, and how their eyes were focused upon Him when He very reverently withdrew from His place and went forward to the sacred depository. With that reverent touch He reached for the scroll and when He took it and as He unfolded it, He read, mind you, of all the words that He might have read, these are the words that He read--"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable word of the Lord." And that's what he read. And so attentively they waited now: what comes next? The Sacred Page says, "He closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all of them in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Why did He talk like that? Ah, but before I answer that question for you, let me tell you how they believed. You remembered, "This day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." Do you know what they did? They shouted "blasphemy", they said He was a liar, they said He was making light of God, He was ridiculing God in their midst and the total outcome of the matter

was this: they drove Him from the synagogue. They'd stand for no talk like that from any young upstart from Nazareth, and the terrible, terrible fact, I think, remains that Jesus never returned to Nazareth. Nazareth remains recorded upon the page of history as the town that missed its chance.

Now I want to ask you two questions this morning. Why did He talk the way He did? The second question, why did they believe the way they did? Think of all the things that Jesus could have said. He could have talked about the law, He could have talked about Moses, He could have talked about the history of the church, He could have talked about the good people long, long ago, He could have talked about what wonderful things God had done for His chosen people, He could have taken their collective gaze and said, "Look back there; back there is God." But He did not. He said, "This day this scripture is being fulfilled in your ears. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Why did He talk that way? The answer, beloved, is a very central answer; He could not possibly talk any other way.

He was full of God, He had had a rendezvous with God, weeks and months and years. He had come to know God face to face, and the fact of facts remained God had placed His hand upon Him, He could not evade it. He was the God-conscious Christ, if I may use that figure of speech. He was the God-inebriated. He was high unto the God-intoxicated. So much so that in succeeding days, no matter where He went, when people heard Him, when people saw Him, when people were awed by His presence they had to put their fingers to their lips and they had to whisper, "God!" And in succeeding centuries the body of believers has come to look upon Him and said, "Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." Jesus Christ in the synagogue in Nazareth that day said, "I am here to do God's work today. The spirit of the Lord is upon me. It's the only thing I know. I haven't anything else to say."

I go back to the second question. Why did they treat Him then the way they did? Why didn't they say, "This is wonderful"? Why didn't they say, "Incredible as it may seem, we will accept Him, we will love Him, we will follow"?

I'll tell you why they drove Him from the town. It was too uncomfortable. It was too difficult to believe in a God of the present hour. It was too difficult, it was too uncomfortable to believe in a God who could speak person to person today. It's a lot easier, beloved, to believe in the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. It's a lot easier to believe in the God of the long ago. It is a great deal easier to put God in stained glass windows. It is a great deal easier to enshrine God in an altar. But to put God in our midst and to make Him speak our language today and to have God, of all things, to stare a man in the eye and to speak to him in a language that he cannot possibly misunderstand; ah, that is something different, something terribly different.

It's Browning, isn't it, who talks about his Archbishop who walked the sacred aisle with the magnificent vestments of the church, who conducted the liturgy so beautifully, who knelt before the altar and began to recite the prayers of the church, to use the ancient words of a people who had come to God in the long ago, and without thinking Browning's Archbishop, if I remember it correctly, says, "O God, we beseech Thee, hear us", as much as to say, "O God, hear me right now." They found the Archbishop dead, stricken dead because Browning would have us to believe that when his Archbishop implored God to speak to him today, there was a still quiet voice that said "Yes?" The God who speaks today and the God who speaks person to person--it is a horrifying experience; it is a lot easier to keep Him in the long ago. But I submit to you this morning, the only God worth loving and the only God worth serving and the only God worth obeying is the God of the contemporary hour, the God who stands by your side and says today, "This is what should be done today". They wanted a God of the long ago. They could not stand the pressure of a God of the contemporary scene.

Jesus Christ came and said, "Today God has spoken to me and He expects me to do this now, now." It is interesting to observe that Jesus Christ never

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made it known that He came to the established church of His day to improve the liturgy, necessary as the liturgy may be in the life of any worshipping people. It is interesting to observe that Jesus Christ never said, "I have come to uphold simply the traditions of the church," necessary as the ^{link} ~~line~~ with the past must be. But time and again Jesus Christ said, "I have come today to do the only thing that is precious in God's sight and that is to see that souls are redeemed, that men are saved from their sins."

I presume, beloved, that every sermon to a degree becomes autobiographical. Unashamedly I tell you this could be my inaugural. This is the day when I shall be installed as your pastor. I have come for only one purpose: to concern myself with the things that God lays at our hand and our heart today in the life of Saint Luke Church. There may be many things that may concern us to carry on the fine traditions of a church so young yet so precious as they have been established already; to improve as best I can, in whatever way it may be, the organizational life of this church and the church at worship; but always and uppermost as your pastor ~~and~~ my supreme passion shall be the salvation of men's souls in the name of Jesus Christ today.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"--
today, today!

Raymond Shaheen

ST. LUKE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Silver Spring, Maryland

February 12, 1956

This morning's sermon, entitled A Better Boon Than Alms, has as its text a verse from the Gospel for the day, the ~~forty~~-first verse of the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, "And Jesus stood and said unto him, What is it that Thou wouldst that I do unto Thee, and he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight."

I'm not so sure that I would be so impatient with Bartimaeus if for any reason at all he would have indicated a measure of impatience with Jesus Christ on this particular occasion. God ~~is~~ⁱⁿ Jesus Christ is standing still and asks a blind man, "What do you want?" What would a blind man want? With this most important faculty of sight denied him, to stand and ask a blind man, "What is it that you want?" But that's ~~exactly~~^{exactly} what our Blessed Lord did. Before He would perform a miracle, before He would bestow a blessing, He makes the man say in his own words the thing that it is that he wants most.

Let me give you a bit of background. Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, had a very fortunate location. Jericho was a lovely city. It was, to all intents and purposes I presume, the vacationland of Palestine, located some fifteen miles north-northeast of Jerusalem. It was the place where many a man would seek to go at holiday-time. It was a beautiful city, roses everywhere, palm trees on every side of every little corner, any nook; no matter where you might go, it was a city of beauty. And I think it must have been that on more than one occasion when the troops that were garrisoned at the royal city of Jerusalem, when these men would be given opportunity for furlough or for a brief rest period, they made a mighty exodus for Jericho.

Bartimaeus had a good spot. The rich people came to Jericho, the people

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on holidays, the people on vacation, the soldiers on furlough. How extravagant they must have been with their coins. Bartimaeus had a good spot. But Bartimaeus was blind. Bartimaeus never saw the roses that he could smell. He never saw the magnificent palms lifted in the air above him. He never saw the colors, the majestic colors of the uniforms of the soldiers when on occasion they'd have a dress parade in Jericho. Bartimaeus was blind.

One day the word had come that Jesus of Nazareth was to pass that way. How the heart and the soul of Bartimaeus must have leaped. "Jesus! He's coming to Jericho. He will pass by my place." And as the crowds came with all the gaiety and all the frivolity that can even accompany a crowd, there was so much of the facetious about it, there was so much laughter about it, could it be that this is the crowd that accompanies Jesus Christ? And when Bartimaeus heard the crowd coming, he had to ask, "What does this mean?" It could have been that they sang no hymns. It could have been that there was none in the company of the crowd who would say, "Let us pray. Let us thank God for this life of Jesus Christ who has come to us." There was no talk like that. It was only the atmosphere of a crowd, and Bartimaeus--sad fact, isn't it?--"What does this mean?" He could not detect from the crowd that Jesus Christ was in their midst. There's something, my friend, to lay upon your heart. He could not detect from the crowd itself that Jesus Christ was in their midst, so he asks the question, "What does this mean?" and someone says, "Why, Jesus the Christ is passing by." Immediately, spontaneously, with complete abandon he throws himself before Jesus Christ vocally: "Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me." They tried to make him stop but they only irritated Bartimaeus. Couldn't they see that he was blind? Do you think for a single minute that Bartimaeus was going to allow the opportunity of opportunities to go by? He was blind; they could see. So he cried so much the more, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me."

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How delighted the soul of Jesus Christ must have been. Here is a man who asks a better boon than alms. Here is a man who wants something above and beyond this world. Here is a man who asks for the opportunity of becoming a responsible person, willing to assume the obligation of vision, of health, and of strength. Doesn't it do something to you when you recognize the truth that when Jesus Christ gave sight to Bartimaeus, the face that he first beheld was the face of Jesus Christ. And because this is true, Bartimaeus gets up from the place where he had been, throws himself behind Jesus Christ, and follows him, and Bartimaeus is never again the same. Now he can see and because he can see, he will love, he will serve, he will follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Christ of every street, He is the God of every way. Soon or late He may appear before you. He will not pass by any man. He comes to us where we are. And in the troubling and in the stirring of our souls, we too may ask, "What does it mean?" and it may occur to us that this thing that's happening on the way of life is the drawing near of Jesus Christ. And when He stands by your side and He stares you in your soul, "Here I am; what do you want most?" Beloved, ask for a better boon than alms; ask from God what He wants most to give--spiritual perception.

There is no greater blessing than to behold the face of God. It is the crying need of this generation. Men need most to see the face of God, and once they have seen it, they can never again be as they were. This, beloved, is most certainly true.

Raymond Shaheen

Dear Pastor Shaheen,

Re: the attached

At the last minute, after you started speaking, I decided to take the Communion Meditation on the back of my Church bulletin and, therefore, missed your introductory remarks. Otherwise, except for several words missed on the seventh line, I believe you will find it complete.

I hope the type on our 40-year old typewriter is discernible. The "m's" and some of the other letters are a bit chopped off.

Genevieve

* * * * * The second chapter of the Book of Joel, the twelfth verse, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart". And I speak back to the prophet tonight and I say to him, "Do you mean what you say? Shall I turn to God with all my heart?" It is not clean. How can any man stand, yea, verily, how should any man kneel before a sacred altar without searching his heart, and as he approaches the very cross by which during the Lenten season we see again the fine print * * * * * how then can any man turn to God with all his heart, for he knows that his heart is not clean. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." These were the words of a wicked man, but once the world called him good; these were the words of once a proud man, but in the sight of God, David, made humble, knows himself as a sinner. "Shall I come then to God?" I ask the prophet, "Is your invitation a sound one? If I turn to God with all my heart, it is laden with sin." And the prophet speaking before his day would remind me that he speaks aright, for in the distance he sees one who came as the very lamb of God, who took the sin of all mankind to a lonely hill and offered himself a sacrifice, knowing full well the redemptive life of Jesus Christ. The prophet says, "With all your heart; with all your heart."

So this night we respond as we mark the first day of the Lenten season. It is a significant thing, I tell you again, that the folder that brought to the people of St. Luke Church the announcements of the Lenten services, should have on its cover the appealing Christ with arms outstretched, for the season of Lent is the time when man says, I will accept God; I will come to Jesus Christ; I will become penitent; I will bring to him my sinful soul. Strikingly enough, that is the qualification of qualifications in order to receive the blessed sacrament.

As we take this holy bread, the sacred bread and the holy cup, the only one

who is entitled to receive it is the man who comes with all his heart and knows that this sacred communion is for sinners only.

The prophet is right -- come just as you are, laden with sin. Here you receive the Redeemer's touch. Here there is cleansing grace. This, my friends, is the meaning of the sacrament experience tonight.

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Sermon - February 19, 1956 - "Disciple" - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

On these Sunday mornings of the Lenten season I want to preach upon the general theme, "A Study of Names". The study will concern itself with the names given to these who were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ at the very beginning. A name, as you know, is descriptive and oft-times becomes the telling thing of character. I remember when I read -- so it seems, for the first time -- the book of the Acts of the Apostles -- a peculiar kind of reaction that I had when my eyes suddenly fell upon what seemed then as a rather unecclesiastical term of speech. Here in this beautiful language of the King James Version of the Bible, as an example, and there we read in the Book of the Acts of the Apostle about a group of men and women, and this is the way it is put: "They who have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." They who have turned the world upside down. This body of believers. This group of men who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ had come to a certain community. They took note of the way they left. They observed their actions. And what happened in this town, happened elsewhere, and in turn they were given names. They were called by interesting catalogues of descriptions. And because a name can become the telling thing of character, it seems to me that we of contemporary Christianity may give man an insight as to the meaning of the Christian faith.

What did God intend his people to be like? who knows, as we study their names, perhaps we shall look inside their souls, and that in itself may become sermon material for us in this, our day.

A name. You know, don't you, it has been told us that over in Merrie Old England, the man who was first called "Smith" was called "G-ith" because that is what he did in the village. He was the village smith. There are those who believe that the first man who was called "Baker" - "Mr. Baker" - got the name because that is what he did. That is what he was in the community. The first family to take the name of "Wood" -- well, you can finish it for yourself. The name was descriptive and the name was definitive. That is what they were -- what they did. Let us apply that

to the men and women who made up the church at the very beginning. who were they? what were they called?

In the 10th Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, these words are to be found: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent forth." Who were these men that Jesus saw fit to commission them? Of all the people on the face of the earth to be given the great command by Jesus Christ and to be told, "Now you can go and these things you will be able to do. And I want you to do it in my name." Who were they? The first name that they ever carried was the name "disciple" and that is the name with which we are concerned this morning -- Disciple.

From the Greek the word "Disciple", well it means a learner, a follower, one who is willing to be taught, one who is willing to be guided. And interestingly enough, that is what Jesus told these men and women, these souls who came into his company in the beginning. The requirement of requirements was this -- not so much that they had so much of a bank balance, not so much that they had established themselves in the community and had enviable prestige, not so much that they had received so much academic learning. That was not the requirement of requirements. The requirement of requirements so far as Jesus was concerned was this -- do you show any indication that you are willing to be led? Is there a disposition on your part that you shall be willing to be taught?

What a wonderful thing to read in the pages of the new Testament how Jesus would go preaching sermons, how he went performing miracles. But the great dramatic moments when he would stand in front of the people, and to this likely soul or to that likely soul, he would say -- what would he say? He would say, "Come, follow me." And that was the requirement of requirements. Peter, James, John, Matthew, Andrew, Bartholomew, and the great host of the unnamed -- "Come, follow me." That is what

it is to be a Christian -- to meet the first requirement -- willingness to be led; a disposition to be taught.

Now I want to tell you three things about disciples. To become a disciple is always a matter of decision. No man becomes a follower of Jesus Christ casually. No man becomes a follower of Jesus Christ accidentally. There is always the great divine human encounter. When Jesus Christ stands in front of a man and the man himself gives an answer. I will, or I will not. Discipleship is always a matter of decision. It is never to be understood that any man can drift to the gate of heaven. It is not reasonable to believe that any man can build his Christian experience simply upon the experience of his wife, of his son, of his daughter, of his father, or of his mother. No one can ever make a decision in your behalf. One of the great moments in the service of Confirmation in the Lutheran Church is when the pastor stands and looks each candidate in the eye and says, "will you?" "do you believe?" And each in turn should answer, "I believe." "I will." Nobody else can answer in your behalf. And discipleship, in the first place, is always the matter of individual decision. And, may I say to you, parenthetically and none-the-less important, if somewhere in your life you feel that there has never been that personal commitment, that decisive moment, then you have yet to know what it is. To take the very great step in discipleship is to be able to say "Yes" to Jesus Christ. The first thing about discipleship is always a matter of decision.

The second thing about discipleship, and this, too, must always be understood, and I hope you are prepared to receive it, discipleship is a difficult thing. I have never had patience with people who have gone preaching that it is an easy thing to become a Christian, or that it is an easy thing to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It is the hardest thing in the world. And, while I am a firm believer that the doors of the church should be opened to all, sometimes I think it is a healthy thing, if, figuratively speaking, you can keep in mind that the church is a high threshold to which a man has to make some effort in order to be a member. Effort should become a necessary part of the Christian religion, because Christian religion is never to

be thought of as a thing of convenience and a very easy experience. Ah, beloved, I have good authority for what I am telling. I remember the words of the Lord, Jesus Christ, who, when he was concerning himself with discipleship, said in no unmistakable fashion, "If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross", and cross-bearing has never been a pleasant, nor an easy thing. If your Christian experience is a very easy thing, then there is something wrong with your Christian experience. And, to those of you who may be here who find it terribly difficult to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, do not become discouraged because it is a healthy sign if, in the office and in the market place, with effort you must retain your Christian conviction, then you can be certain that you are still on the road. If in your social life it costs you something to be a follower of Jesus Christ, then you may rest assured that you are still to be numbered among the followers. To be a disciple is a difficult thing. That is one reason why it is so pleasant. You cannot divorce the cross from the crown in the Christian religion.

Now, the third thing I must tell you about, what it means to be a disciple is this: It is a matter of decision, and it is a difficult thing. But I can't let the sermon stop at that point. I must also tell you, if you are bold enough and brave enough to take it, discipleship is a daily thing. The Christian practice of religion, or I should say, the practice of Christian religion, was never meant to be an on-again, off-again, thing, nor does our Jesus, our blessed Lord, provide for absenteeism in the practice of the Christian religion. To any man who had come after him to be his follower Jesus said, "Let him take up his cross and daily follow me." You see, that is the only way that some people are ever going to know that there is anything to the Christian religion -- if it is something that can stand up to the test of every day. Oh, this might be a pleasurable thing to come on a Sunday morning into quiet and the reverence of this holy spot. But to practice belief in the Lord Jesus Christ tomorrow, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, day by day, that is something else. For it may be that beyond these walls

in the monotonous routine of life, with all of its struggles, that may be the only time that some people will ever know that you are a follower. That is why Jesus Christ says, daily follow me.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, in one of his magnificent books, tells about a young woman who decided to become a nurse, and to her it was a matter of Christian conviction. She was, I forget to tell you, an Armenian girl. She was living in her own land at the time of this terrible thing about which I now recite. The Turks had come and had committed terrible atrocities. A captain in the Turkish army looked upon her with lustful eyes, and he took her for himself. He her, and what is more, he shot two of her kin in cold blood. Miraculously, she escaped, and after she gained some sense of normality, she went back to her nursing profession. As she was serving on volunteer duty one night, she went from bedside to bedside in the ward of the hospital where some prisoners had been brought, and by the faint flickering of her lamp, she discerned the outline of the face of the Turkish captain. Now, what will the Christian do? what will this follower of Jesus Christ do now? The slightest inattention on her part could bring death. Nothing that she might deliberately just do, but any number of things that she might not do could bring sweet revenge. But she is a follower of Jesus Christ. She nurses him to health and strength, and once he is restored, that awful moment comes. "Why did you do it? You know what I did to you, and how I killed your brothers. And why did you do what you have done for me now?" Her only answer is this: "I am a follower of Jesus Christ." Incredible, you say? Only a follower of Jesus Christ, a true follower, could talk like that. Only a true follower of Jesus Christ could behave like that. Maybe because we have not seen enough of the real thing, that we say it is incredible. But, I tell you this for this purpose -- suppose the Christian nurse would have said, "Oh, Lord, today excuse me from the practice of the Christian religion. I said my prayers this morning, but right now, Oh God, don't ask me to behave like a Christian. Don't ask me to follow you." Suppose she would have said, "Yesterday I followed you; to-morrow I

will follow you again. But today, oh God, it is too much." Suppose she had been a disciple of Jesus Christ, but not on a daily basis? And the glory of Christendom is the glory of Christendom because there are daily disciples in difficult places.

I have always had a measure of covetousness in my soul. I frankly confess I covet those who have the blood of the artist flowing through their veins, who can take a brush and a bit of canvas, and then on the plain canvas bring enough

. But in the end you have the outline and figures of

. If I were an artist, I would want to put on canvas an interpretation of the Gate of Heaven. I would love to put there the great host of followers of Jesus Christ coming to the Great Gate, and then I would like to draw him. I would like to have Jesus Christ stand by the gates and stop them in their steps, and say to them before they enter, "Who are you?" Then with a kindly smile upon his face, I would have him say, "But that isn't what I really want to ask. I would like to ask you, 'How did you get here?'" "How came you to the very Gate of Heaven?" And what rapture my soul would know when I had their faces and their souls exclaim, "Master, how did we get here? How did we get to the very Gate of Heaven? Master, we simply followed you."

That is what it means to be a disciple -- to follow Jesus. And do you know what happens in the end? When you follow Jesus Christ, you get up there.

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Sunday, February 26, 1956 - "Believer" Pastor Raymond Shaheen

Shakespeare was only half right when he said, "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet". Shakespeare was only half right, for there is something in a name. That is exactly why we use them. That is why we give them. That is why we get them. A name is descriptive. A name itself can be a significant thing. I walk by a public school playground, and I listen as carefully as I can

" , Watch those rounds after this." And as I peer through the fence, I can see exactly the youngster to whom he makes the reference. The name itself is descriptive. For if he says, "Isn't Freckles playing on first base?", if there were ten boys, I could easily discern the one of whom he speaks. The name is descriptive. And what is more, there comes a time when a name becomes the telling thing of basic character. He is an honorable man. He is clean. He is decent. And the word that I wish to be used much more than it is, He is a reverent soul, a reverent soul. The name, or the word, is descriptive, and, I repeat, oftentimes becomes the telling thing of a man's basic character. That is why these Sunday mornings during Lent we are studying together the names which were carried by the men and women who were Christians in the very beginning.

One reads in the Books of the Acts of the Apostles where reference is made to them -- "they who have turned the world upside down have come here also " Who were they that turned the world upside down? By what names were they called? And by a study of their names we may gain an insight into their character and, what is more, learn to appreciate the role of a Christian in contemporary society.

The name we discussed last Sunday morning was the name "Disciple", the name that Jesus chose to give them. He called them, that they might learn, that they might follow. And the first requirement he makes of any man who would take the name of Jesus Christ is that he has shown an indication, a disposition to learn and to be taught. In the 5th Chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles one reads

in the 14th verse, "And believers were the more added to the Lord; multitudes both of men and women." So here there is a second name that came to them. They were called "Believers". They were different from other people because of what they believed. I want to tell you, parenthetically at this moment, that there is a lot of sloppy thinking done in the realm of religion. We use statements and phrases so easily, and sometimes they cannot stand up against the searching way of truth. Take this statement - maybe you made it, maybe your best friend has used it. "Well, it doesn't make much difference what a man believes. It is what he does that matters." "It doesn't make much difference what a man believes. It is what he does that matters." That is simply thinking . For what a man believes determines what he does. Creed is always the motivating ground for ~~conduct~~ ^{conduct} ~~conflict~~ ^(?). What a man believes determines what he is; what a man believes determines what he does; how he orders his life; how he treats people. That wit, Gilbert K. Chesterton, spoke wisely and well when he told about a man who would go into a strange community looking rather than looking for a good landlady

"How do you brew your coffee, and how do you ?

When looking her straight in the eye, I would say, What is your total view of the universe? What do you believe about God? 'For you see,' says Gilbert K. Chesterton, "it would be a far safer thing to eat at her table if he knew that she had some concept of basic truth and values." What she believes will determine how she orders her daily life, and the kind of house she keeps, and the type of person she is. It does make a difference what a man believes and what a man believes determines how he lives.

I want to share with you a very unpleasant illustration, which is most certainly true. Not long after the close of the war back in 1947, I was on the express going from Zurich to Warsaw. As we neared the Polish border, my friend came to me and said, "Would you care to come with me? There is something I would like to see for myself." It was two o'clock in the morning, and I wasn't much bent on going anywhere. But until the last day I live, I will regret I did not accept the invita-

tion. Two or three days later when I met Morris again at the Polish customs, he told me what he had seen. (I must tell you that Morris was a Jew).

Morris was not ^{blind} lying to the fact that six million Jews had been put to death and a great many of them put in concentration camps during the Great War, and immediately

Morris had gone to KATOWICE

where he had visited concentration camps. He recited for me the unspeakable things that he saw. Even in private, I would hesitate to mention them to any of you. After he had recited these terrible deeds of man, Morris, who had the happy faculty of raising the right question - I saw him do it time and time again -- in this instance he does not think and he raises the right question; he asks, "What must they have believed that they could have done these terrible things? What must the Nazis have believed that they could have done these terrible things?" It was because they believed certain things about human personalities. It was because they believed certain things about the state that they did what they did. It makes a difference what a man believes, because what he believes determines what he does.

Now when we come to the study of the life of the early Christian, what did he believe? What made him live the way he lived, and what is more, what made him die so gloriously? Let me suggest several things ^{by way of} of an intimation.

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In the first place, and I think, very, very complimentary so, the early Christian who carried the name, Believer, was a man who believed in the person of Jesus Christ. He anchored his faith in a personality. It is one thing to say you believe in beauty. It is one thing to say you believe in honor. It is one thing to say you believe in decency. But those things in themselves, until you see a thing of beauty and you have an affection for it . It is one thing to say that you believe in decency and honor, and even that has no meaning until you know the person who is the epitome -- who is clean and decent and honorable. These men and women ^{who} came to know Jesus Christ and who lived with him discovered in those agonizing days of Good Friday and Silent Saturday that they could not think of living in a world without Jesus Christ -- they could not think of living in a world without

Jesus Christ, and there they developed, as they had never developed before, their belief in the person of Jesus Christ. You see, beloved, that is one of the great advantages that we Christians have over the so-called They believe simply in moral values in general. We believe in them in the personification of them in Jesus Christ, and these early Christians committed themselves by way of faith in the person of Jesus Christ. They believed in him.

In the second place, allow me to suggest that they believed this about Jesus Christ - that no matter what might happen to them, whatever their problem would be, Jesus Christ would be interested in it. Come wind or weather, peace or pain, poverty or plenty, always they could bring their problem to Jesus Christ. And, if perhaps in the shape of things, he could not wave that finger of his and remove all the objections, they believed none-the-less that Jesus Christ would give them strength to face their problems. And they also believed that to Jesus Christ, it wasn't so much what happened to them that counted most. It was what they were able to do with that thing in his name to make something of them, like taking a Cross and making it into a crown. They believed that, and they did it.

And, then in the third place, they believed in the presence of Jesus Christ. They believed that no matter where they went, no matter what they did, Jesus was always within reach. They took him at his word -- "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." They believed in the presence of Jesus, and God was no remote diety. Their God in Jesus Christ stood by their side. anywhere, everywhere.

If I were to number among the great experiences of my life ,
I would have to include in the somewhere the vast assembly of people who
listened for about two hours, maybe about one and one-half hours, I have forgotten now who had been a personal prisoner of Adolph Hitler for 8½
years. Martin Niemöller, telling of the experiences of his life while a personal prisoner of Adolph Hitler. And I know very well that everyone of us present
there in that assembly

And all he said was a reiteration of that one great answer. Out of your experiences, what was the indelible fact that remains -- you who were kept in confinement, you the prisoner? Martin Niemoeller said, This is the fact of facts. I came to believe and understand, as I had never known before, that Jesus Christ is alive, and what is more, that Jesus Christ was with me in my prison cell.

That is why they called them "Believers" in the very beginning. That is the way they thought. That is what they believed.

I allowed the rest of the curious band of tourists to go their way one day, and I sort of secreted myself in the shadows of the arches in the Coliseum, as I said to myself, This must be a rendezvous that I now would keep with the faithful before , and I remembered how they had brought the Christians to the Coliseum, how the emperor had made sport of it, and I said, I will close my eyes, and with my ears I will try to listen. And as I closed my eyes, I could see the Christians being tossed into the dungeons, waiting until the guard would lead them out into the arena, and with my ears I could hear the insane laughs and sneers of a mad emperor while he delighted in the agony of the Christians. But that was not all I could hear. With my ears and my soul being still, I could hear -- I could hear the hymns of the Christians from the dungeons as they sang and they sang and they sang the glorious note, Jesus Christ is alive, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. That is why they did what they did. They believed that Jesus Christ was greater than Nero; they believed that death in the name of Jesus Christ was something more wonderful than to be able to live without him.

Then I must tell you this. These early Christians believed also that when their last hour is come, Jesus would call them by name and have a place for them, especially set aside for them. These early Christians believed that God had given to them all of this present world and, what is more, heaven, too. They believed that when they had breathed their last, there would be Jesus.

I want to share with you something which in my book I classify as quite precious. I warn you it is quite naive, and I trust not too naive for a more astute

mind. I read about it. It happened over in England in a little village. There was a man who could not attend Church on Sundays, but he had a reverent feeling in his heart for God and for life itself. And he would be seen to come to the village church almost without fail day after day, park his bicycle at the gate, and taking off his hat, the sacred aisle, and the information that makes up the story is this: He did this day after day, but he never tarried very long. And for a short while, almost secretly, he would bend his knee and be on his way. After a certain period of time when he no longer appeared, the Vicar gathered together what fragments he could about this strange creature, and as a result he was able to go to a certain simple house and was ushered into the presence of this man. He found him upon a sick bed. Being in the room but a short while, he could sense that death was quite imminent. But the man wanted to talk, and the good Vicar allowed him to talk as he could. And I give to you now what was the result of the conversation: Padre, I could never get to Church on Sundays, and I was not much of a praying man, but I felt always I wanted to be able to go to God's house, and I had little time other than my lunch hour. I would steal away on my bike, and Padre, I am not much of a praying man, and I don't know much what to say when I talk to God. And you know what I would do, I would kneel on the prayer desk (?), and I would simply say, Jesus, this is ^{Jamie} ~~Jenna~~. And then, I would go. The man had little more to say. Shortly after he had said that, there was that pause. He began to speak again, and said, Padre, Padre, do you know what I heard right now, Padre? I heard someone say, ^{Jamie} ~~Jenna~~, this is Jesus. Do not dare think that naive, my friends, too naive for your sophisticated minds. There are some folks who would barter all they possessed to be able to talk and to think like that. To believe in Jesus Christ in this world and to know him in the next is the greatest single asset of the human soul.

Poetry (?)

Beloved, whatever else you thank God for this night, be sure to thank him for your believing heart. It is your greatest single asset.

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Sunday, March 4, 1956

"Friend"

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

John 15:1-16

Permit me to remind you again of what we are trying to do these Sunday mornings during the Lenten season. We are trying to understand the names given to the early followers of Jesus Christ. For we are committed to the principle that a name does have a meaning, and as we understand the name, so we shall appreciate in a better way the type of life which the followers of Jesus Christ lived, even in the very beginning. The two names already considered were the name "Disciple" and the name "Believer". This morning - the very precious and tender name, Friend.

The names that they brought were inevitable, for what a man is comes to light, and will always have a name for character.

There are three things that we ought to keep in mind when we think about the name, "Friend" in the Christian contacts. Particularly this morning the name, "Friend," that was the name that Jesus Christ chose specifically for his followers. It must have been a great moment in their lives when he called them into the private fellowship that belonged to that intimate group; and if you will permit me to do this, let me in an imaginative way recall what could have been his words: I have been with you now for some time. I remember how I found each one of you, and now for a period of weeks and months we have walked a rather common path. I think you are wondering what I think of you. In what role do I consider each of your lives?

It must have been a great moment when as John in the 15th Chapter puts it, he said to them, "I call you friends. Ye are my friends." It must have been a great moment in their lives when Jesus Christ tells them that he looks upon them as his friends. Beloved, there can never be a greater compliment paid to you by any man than for any man when he thinks of you to say, "I consider him my friend." When you think of the word "Friend", you must remember it was a name that they got because Jesus gave it to them. Whatever else Jesus wanted to be to them at the very beginning, he wanted to be a friend. That is a tremendous concept in the Christian gospel. There were many people in many places before the dawn of the Christian faith

who believed in a God. There were many people in many places who knew that there was a God somewhere. But for most of these people he was the Great Unapproachable One. He did not reveal himself.

He did not draw near to them. There was no traffic whatever between God and the creative children. But since Jesus Christ came to this earth he was the personification of the friendliness of God -- God stooping to touch them; God taking the great initiative; God coming into their lives; and God making the overture, "I want to be your friend." Mystery of mysteries -- the fact remains, the Christian God is friendly. When a true disciple thinks of Jesus Christ, he thinks of Jesus Christ as the perfect friend.

Once when one of the writers of the Gospel was trying to put all of the life of Jesus Christ into one phrase, one turn of speech, one picture, what do you suppose he shows? He did not simply refer to him as the Master -- well he could have. He did not simply think of him as the Great Teacher -- that, too, he could have done. He did not even refer to him as Saviour, the reason being that he could not appreciate the full meaning of that term until after the Cross. But when the writer of the Gospel talked about Jesus Christ, with one swell (?) stroke to pile meaning upon meaning, and to say this, this is how most of us talk of him, the writer of the Gospel chose this figure -- friend of sinners. We saw him as our friend. And when the believer in Jesus Christ at the very beginning thought of Jesus, whatever figure of speech he might have brought to use, he could not have passed by this figure -- Jesus was his friend.

I hesitate to say it generally beyond the confines of the study of a personal conference, because I can never fully appreciate the type of temperament that might be present in a group of people such as this, this morning. But there is something that I am constrained to tell you, and I must remind you it is only a legend, and you must also remember it is not found anywhere in the Bible, but it is a very lovely type of legend. It is a story I have been told about St. Peter making his rounds in heaven, going from one flock of people to

another, and knowing the great measure of delight in recognizing them because he had been there at the Great Gate when they first made their entrance. And every now and then, as the legend puts it, St. Peter would come to a strange face. He could not possibly recall having seen this person before, surely never being able to recall seeing them passing through the main gate to Heaven, and St. Peter was troubled. And he decides to make a one man investigation -- How did they get here? **By** what gate did they come? And then, St. Peter continuing his investigation makes his rounds everywhere. At evening he comes to a little used corner in Heaven, so it seems, and lo and behold, at this great wall around about heaven, according to the legend, he sees a figure leaning over the wall with an arm that is lowered and a hand out-stretched, giving one man after another a lift and ushering him into Heaven over the wall. St. Peter is greatly disturbed and he comes up to the man and he lays his hand upon his shoulder, as much as to draw him back

and of all things, the face that he beholds is the face of Jesus Christ. Only a legend, remember, but there is something in the legend and St. Peter is troubled. What is the meaning of this? -- Waiting for Jesus to explain. And the legend says that Jesus explains in this fashion. They are terribly, terribly . They have been crawling on their knees. I have discovered that they do not think themselves worthy to approach the main gate, and I hard them round about at the back wall. When I looked over the wall, I recognized them. I remembered them from when I was on earth. They are my friends. St. Peter turns and walks away, mumbling to himself -- they are his friends; they are his friends; they are his friends. **At the very beginning, whatever they ? no matter how**

their lives, no matter how disappointing they must have been to one another and even to God Jesus Christ came into their lives and he said, I offer you my friendship, the great overture of a perfect friend. Whenever you think of the word, Friend, in the Christian concept, you must remember that that is exactly what Jesus Christ wants of them, and then building upon that you come to the second lesson:

gation and everyone listens. That is not the Christian church. It may be part of it, but that is not the true picture of the Christian Church. The true picture must always be The Society of the Friends of Jesus Christ.

In the third place, when you come to use the name, "Friend", we must remember that after awhile they remembered that Jesus was their friend, and they remembered they were friends, one to another, and because these two things were true, they were in duty-bound to show themselves friendly towards people who did not think as they thought, and even to people who might not embrace the same religious faith. They were the friends of Jesus Christ; they were the friends of other people who believed in Jesus Christ, and now say they, we must prove ourselves friendly to those outside the circle. And that is the hardest part of being a friend. It is easy to be friends to those who are friends of us. It is easy to like those who like us. But to show yourselves kindly disposed towards those who are not of the inner circle, that is something entirely different. And yet I wonder if any man has a right to the name, Friend, until he finds himself cast in the role of being a friend to every man.

I love that description of a man who is charged to go to the railway station to greet the guest preacher, and he said to the man who laid upon him the responsibility, : "How do I know him? I have never seen him; I have never heard him preach." "When you get to the railroad station, just you look around for a tall man helping somebody." What a grand description to be catalogued -- that you will find him friendly, helping somebody.

Here is an unpleasant thing to recite. It is a shame it ever happened in a Christian Church, but once there was a man who found / his congregation that a woman was coming who had an reputation, but by the grace of God she was saved, and she knew very well that she belonged in a Church, for what is a Church except the group of those who are redeemed and who know Jesus as the friend of sinners, and so she came to Church, and some of the women knew of her bad reputation and they began to gossip and say unkind things, and they did not make her

feel at ease. Isn't it a terrible thing that there are such persons who can never have *done* with somebody else's past? And they went to the Rector and suggested that he tell her that she ought not to come back. He was foolish enough to do it. And then she turned upon him, and with terror in her eyes, "Tell me, then, will you, is there any place in this town where a sinner can be made to feel at home?"

was being driven away from a church.

The early Christians were men and women who showed themselves friendly towards a world that was not friendly, and by the way, you are not forgetting, are you, that the only way that some people will ever know that God is friendly is through your life. Maybe they will never get to Church. Maybe they will never read the Bible, but the only way they may know that God loves them may be through you. I think if I were a stranger in a community, I would make it my business to go to some Church on a Sunday morning, and I think I might find it easy to return to the Church -- if the sermon might be good, if the place of worship reflected beauty and reverence, I would find it easy to go back to that Church. If the music would feed my soul, and there would not be anything ~~d~~distracting, I would find it easy to go back to that Church. But honestly now, if I felt that the people were not friendly, if I were given to feel that it made no difference to them at all whether I came or didn't come, I would not find it very easy to go back to that Church. In fact, if I did go back, I would go back not because of them, but in spite of them, because I would claim -- if I could not claim their friendship -- I knew that I could claim the friendship of Jesus Christ.

Now I want to bring this meditation to a close with something that I have scanned from the books of a great preacher. He is trying to illustrate -- I think I will per-mit the illustration to speak -- that the only way that some people will ever know that the face of God has lines of love, that the arms of Jesus Christ are outstretched to help sinners, will be as they find this truth illustrated in the lives of hu-man beings who show themselves friendly. well, this preacher was wont to go on occasion to a Ro-man Catholic Church. I presu-me he would go there for two

reasons -- perhaps he wanted to see what they had that Protestants did not have, and then to appreciate what the Protestants had that Romans did not have. He went to that Church at a certain point in that service when the Priest would lift the wafer, which is the Host, symbolizing the body of Jesus Christ, and that is supposed to be a great moment in Roman worship. But when he went to that Mass, he could not quite appreciate that, and he could not feel that God was very near, in the liturgy that he could not understand. And he could not quite feel that God was very near when his eyes looked at the stations of the Cross. He could not feel that God was very near, and yet it was called God's House, and he expected to find God there. But then he says, while the Mass was going on, and the Priest was at the altar where God is supposed to be found, he heard a child crying and his eyes discovered a tiny tot wandering through the aisles of the Church as though it was lost, sobbing its dear heart out. And then he says he discovered a man who got up from his pew, went out to the aisle where the child was, put his arms around that child and drew the child to his breast, whispered some comforting word, and right away the child's tears stopped, and then he took the child graciously to his own seat. Says the preacher, Maybe for some God could be found at the altar, maybe for some God was there in the lifting of the Host, but for me, God was certainly was present in the heart and soul of the man who showed himself friendly to a frightened child.

Beloved, the only way that some people may ever know that Jesus loves us, that Jesus Christ is our friend, may be through the friendship that comes through you. He who would call God his friend must be a friend to his brother. Henceforth says Jesus Christ, I give you a name -- Friend.

Sunday, March 11, 1956

" Witness "

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

Luks 24:36-48

It was never intended that the Christian should keep his mouth shut. It is also to be believed that there is little room in the Christian Church for the silent type. Now that is the kind of conclusion you come to when you exercise the very healthy habit of asking yourself, Now just what does this text mean? If I were to put it bluntly, What does this text say? You read in the Acts of the Apostles these words He shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon him. . . . be my witnesses . . in Samaria, in Judea and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

When you exercise the healthy habit of asking yourself to put into plain language, what the passage of scripture actually means, you come out with this, based on this passage at least -- A Christian was never intended to keep his mouth shut. And there was little room in the Christian Church for the silent type. Last words are always to be remembered. This was a part of the fare-well of Jesus Christ. It was on the Mount of Olives. And he reminds the beloved band of disciples, You have seen certain things. You have experienced certain things. Now you are going to get power, and the Holy Ghost is going to be in your heart. And he did not stop there. In this last important moment that he could speak with them, he points to them, he points to them the natural conclusion. You have seen, you have heard, now go, tell. You dare not keep this thing to yourself. A Christian must make haste. The world must be told, and Christianity must spread. People must know from people. The great for some of us will always be the extension of the Christian church. Think of it. A lonely man upon a terrible hill. Then a band of disciples saying, It cannot be; it should be different than that. Then in a few select appearances, Jesus Christ comes to them and they say, He is alive; the glorious thing that we know is that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And the truth was so wonderful that they could not keep it to themselves. And they had to go from person to person and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. They could not,

no matter how much they tried, keep their mouths shut. And that is exactly the way Christianity spread. It was the man who came to the market place, who went to the Merchant for a piece of cloth, and he ascertained that there was something different about the merchant, the accent of his life, and lo and behold, invariably in the course of the conversation the name of Jesus Christ was mentioned. The merchant who had come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ could not keep his lips sealed. He has tasted something. He had experienced something. He could not keep it to himself. It was the man who went to the carpenter shop -- perhaps for a yoke for his oxen, a little doll (?) for his daughter, and before he left the carpenter shop, he would have discovered that there was something different in this carpenter. It wasn't simply that his work was well done. It wasn't simply that his shop was well kept. But that look in the man's eye, the accent of his voice, the tone of his personality -- and invariably the conversation would include Jesus Christ. It was the servant girl, the slave grooming the hair of her mistress as they gave themselves to the morning toil, and as they took the brush and the comb, she whispered into the ear of her mistress something about the wonderful grace of Jesus Christ. That is exactly how Christianity spread, because there were men and women who remembered the parting words of our Redeemer -- who have seen, who have experienced. Go -- Tell.

There are times when God sees fit to work through the earthquake, the wind and the fire. There are times when God in his providence, knowing all things well, permits the earthquake, sudden tragedy and calamity, that through that time of crisis, perhaps, people may be turned to thinking of God, but these are not God's preferred methods to make His presence felt and his way known. The preferred method of God is always a person. And when God wanted to speak his sublimest tone, he touched a maiden fair, he touched a humble peasant, honest to the core, and then came in the likeness of a man. When God sees fit to speak his sublimest tongue, he always reaches for a human being. And when he gave his farewell, he said, The world must know. Go -- Tell -- Be my witness.

You are not forgetting -- of course, you are not forgetting, that this is another in the series of sermons based upon the general theme of a study of

names -- the names given to men and women at the beginning of Christianity. And one of the names that belongs to them is the name "Witness". Maybe when they met they did not greet each other and say, "Good morning, Witness Friend". Maybe it was not a name that knew common usage, but in fact and by words it was their role to tell, to become channels of communication about Jesus Christ.

The remainder of this sermon is developed in three ways -- three simple observations, and the one gradually leads to the other.

Thinking of this term "Witness", now a witness, my friend, is a man who declares publicly what he feels personally and privately. It is simply taking the stand. Now here are three observations. Any man and every man who has come to know Jesus Christ is meant to be a witness. You see, that casts asunder that notion that unless you are a man of the cloth, or a deaconess, or a parish worker, or a foreign missionary you do not have to be witnesses. That we expect of those upon whom hands have been placed in a service of ordination. Men and women who have been set aside specifically, we expect them to be witnesses and the primary duty of the proclamation of God's grace is confined to them -- my friends, that is erroneous, to say the least. For here is a breath-taking thing that I would share with you: When Jesus Christ gave his parting command, in the parting message, when he said, "I want you to go and be my witnesses", there was not a single ordained clergy in the lot. They were all occupants of the pews. He was speaking to laymen -- I want you to be my witnesses; you are the ones I want to tell. All the ordained folk came later. But when these words were first spoken, they were spoken to the few. Any man, every man, once he has come to know Jesus Christ has laid upon him the great responsibility of becoming a channel for that communication. You have seen me. You have known me. Be up; be on your way. Tell people. And no man ever really has Jesus Christ until he shares him with somebody else.

Now the next step to be taken in this sermon is this: Any man, every man with what he has can be a witness for Jesus Christ. I am wondering sometimes if the

only unique thing in the world isn't personality? God does not make us according to the general mold. We have likenesses, to be sure, but each human being in the sight of God is distinctive, and if there is anything unique, it is personality. Now the same; to others his greatest gift may be . Some can stand up and speak. Others, perchance not. Some can work with their hands. Others have only the contribution that comes from their creative minds. But God has given to each of us some capacity and some capability which we can use for him. And ,the unique contribution of the Christian church lies in the .diversity of its witnesses. The fact that some people have come to know Jesus Christ by this means, may not be the same means that may work for somebody else. Any man, every man, with whatever it is that he has can be used of God. Any man, every man with what he has, wherever he may be -- that is the third thing. It all ties together beautifully. Any man, every man, with what he has, wherever he may be, can bear witness to Jesus Christ.

The old Scots woman, God bless her soul, when she said to her son who was going away from home to prepare "My lad, whatever you do, speak a good word for Jesus Christ." She could just as well have said that to the son who left the house and who went to the city to become a clerk. If he went to the city to become a doctor, if he went to the city to become a merchant, or a tradesman, or whatever it may have been, to each of her children she could have said with the same degree of conviction, "My lad, my lassie, speak a good word for Jesus Christ, wherever you go, whatever you may do."

Unfortunately there are times when we permit ourselves to think, If only I were somewhere else, I could speak a better word for Jesus Christ. I could be in that city, but not in this. The most uncomfortable place in the world ever to be a Christian was on Calvary's hill. But in Gethsemane Jesus Christ did not turn his back on Calvary. Any man, every man, at any time may be able to bear witness to Jesus Christ. In some places it might be easier, in some cities some people might be more disposed to listen, but if you cannot be a Christian where you are, the chances are

you cannot be a Christian anywhere else. It could be harder, it could be more difficult in one place over against another. But to be a Christian the glorious contribution can be made anywhere and everywhere.

They tell the story of that interesting tombstone that can be found over in England. The peculiar inscription to be read is "Here lies the body of ... (then they give the man's name) who for thirty years repaired shoes in our village to the glory of God." The humble cobbler when he took his rough hands and reached for that dirty pair of shoes that belonged to the youngster, "I must make them securely and as firmly as I can, for when this child wears these shoes against the ravages of weather, he must be protected. He has a body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost." That is the way he reasoned. Even at a cobbler's bench he said to himself, "I must commit this work as Jesus Christ would commit it," and when he died, the townspeople themselves composed for his inscription, Here lies the man who repaired his shoes to the glory of God.

Any man, every man, with what he has, wherever he may be, whatever he may do. Perchance it has not occurred to you that even your coming here this morning has been a matter of witness. Don't you think for a single minute that your non-churched friends fail to take note of the fact that when you head to a church on Sunday morning, you are keeping Sunday holy, you are marking a path to God's house. Even your coming to church is a matter of witness.

I am indebted to Joseph Ford Newton (?), that great divine of the past generation who told about the young man who lived in a home where religion was dealt with in a traditional and very fine way. The Bible, the center of life, was always read in the morning, the parents encouraged the children to read it at night, but the young man went off to college. It was a liberal school and gradually he was taught to believe -- so the Professor, this ungodly man tried to teach him -- that religion and science were not compatible, and if he wanted to be a science major, he could not hold the same degree. The chap was bewildered. God was almost going out

of his study window, but by force of habit, he went to church one Sunday morning. He happened to have been an Episcopalian, and he went to receive the Eucharist at the early morning service at eight o'clock. He went a good bit early, sat down and after a while of all people who should come here but another professor in the science department. He had not had him in class yet, but he had come to revere and respect him as a brave, as a brilliant soul. And he watched the professor as he came to pray -- the way he genuflected, the way he crossed himself, and then the way he knelt at the communion rail, took the Holy Bread and drank of the chalice, and just as reverently and humbly, came back and knelt, sang the hymns, bowed his head for the benediction, left the church. The Professor never said a word, but on and directly, says Joseph Ford Newton, this was the turning point in that man's life as the great and learned professor was bearing witness to a child's faith in a Heavenly Father.

But it is a wonderful thing, beloved, if you can speak directly. It is a wonderful thing if you have been able to cultivate the habit of looking a man in the eye and talking to him about Jesus Christ. A human tongue never reaches a more sublime degree than that when a man's vocabulary includes definite and positive reference to Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful thing to be able to do it directly and personally. There is no substitute for it. But the next best thing is to let the light speak, and be careful, my friend, because your light is always showing. Men have a way of detecting the reality of Jesus Christ in your soul.

I must close with this revelation: you cannot give what you do not have. You cannot speak what you do not know. The witness is taken from the stand as soon as he fails to speak the testimony for which he is qualified to speak. Beloved, the world is thirsting, the world is hungering to learn more about Jesus Christ. And still, as a whole, God's preferred method is person to person, soul to soul, mind to mind, one man after another. Says Jesus, I am going away. Now I want to be seeing you as I did before. (You can paraphrase it that way) But don't forget, you have

seen and you have heard. Pass it on. Tell somebody else.

That is why to this very day when some of us think about God, somewhere in the shadows there is always the face of somebody else -- a Pastor, a Sunday School teacher, a Godly woman, a friend or a neighbor -- always somebody else who first took our hand and slipped it into the hand of God.

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Acty 11:19-26

Sunday, March 18, 1956

"Christian"

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

We come now to the last in the series of sermons based on the general theme, A Study in Names. From Sunday to Sunday we have taken some of the significant names given to the early followers of Jesus Christ -- Disciple, Believer, Friend, Witness, and today we come to the last in the series -- Christian. Surely by this time you have come to ascertain a purpose in this series. It is simply that as we ~~begin~~ begin ~~in~~ these early weeks of my ministry with you, that as Pastor and people we should have a definite understanding of the Christian pattern, so that in whatever years God may give us together we might have the understanding of what it is that Jesus Christ expects from each of us, the type of person he wants us to be, or, what is more, to become. And so in this, my first series of sermons with you, we have been considering the names given to the early Christian, for a name is oftentimes descriptive and becomes the telling-tale of basic character.

The text for this, the final sermon in the series, is the 26th verse of the 11th Chapter of the Book of the Acts of Apostles, " * * * and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch".

Ah ~~say~~, here is the kind of text for which a Pastor will *dream*. It can be divided so easily into three parts, and what is more, answers three very pertinent questions -- Who? What? Where? A healthy outline for any sermon. Who were they who got the name -- and at what place? *what was the name?* ~~Who were they?~~

The text spells it out beautifully. The name was given to the disciples. Ah, that is it -- he who deserves the name which is above every name is the man who daily commits himself; who consistently walks in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The man who got up each day and would deliberately say to himself, Now today, come wind or weather, I will walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

it ~~Now then~~ is always to be understood that the Disciple did not always live perfectly and completely, nor adequately, in the Christian life. The Disciple is not a perfect personality. We are *human*; we are imperfect, and the crowning mark of

of a saint is not perfection -- the crowning mark of a saint is consecration. Daily to commit himself; daily to adore Jesus; daily to say, I will walk with him and for him. The first thing that Jesus Christ asked when he saw you for the first time, the only thing that he asked of me when he saw me for the first time, was not that I should be worthy to follow him, only that I should show him an inclination, a disposition, a willingness on my part, to respond to his challenging command, "Follow Me", and it was to these imperfect, frail creatures of life, who had the next day, who had their temper, who had their little rebuke, who did not always understand themselves or other people, and what is more, did not always understand God and his purpose, but day by day they tried to stay in the way. They did such a good job of it that after a while the people with whom they associated said, There is something different; there is a name that belongs to them that we cannot give others. What was that name? The name that they chose for them was this: Christian. For they ascertained that when these people faced the common ventures of life, they were always reflecting the spirit of Jesus Christ. They observed them. Maybe one of them would say to them -- if they could talk the language today -- "Why you should have seen this man; the way he came and transacted his business with me; There was something so honorable about him, such thoroughgoing integrity, such above-board manner; and I detected in him in the way he transacted his business something that made me say, Why if Jesus Christ was here in my shop, this is the way Jesus Christ would barter and sell."

They observed the way they faced the circumstances of life -- of pain and poverty, peace and plenty, whatever it was, daily it came to all of them alike, but when Christians faced these things, they would say to themselves, He can no more control the circumstances than we can, but these people, these disciples, they seem to do something with these circumstances that we do not do. It isn't so much what happens to them that seems to matter in their lives; it is what they determine to do with the thing that happens to them. And therein is the difference. Why, even these varied of life at different shades and numbers that smash upon us, these Christians have a way of these colors into a marvelous or fabric,

a distinctive design -- in all things they detected the spirit of Jesus Christ. They had no other word for it -- they had no other word than the name of Jesus.

It is significant to note that these people who got the name of Christian in the very beginning got it, not because somebody discovered they were going to Church; they got it not because somebody noted the way they handled their affairs, oftentimes the way they handled their pocketbook; it was not that they took note in particular the way they said their prayers, the way they talked to God, but the way they talked with their fellowmen. And observing these things they said in all these matters they behaved like Jesus Christ; why the only name we can think to give them that marks them is "Christian".

And here is an illustration that comes from the mission field -- they are always quite fresh and there is something about them to startle our souls and open wide the doors of consecrated evangelism. Presumably there was a man assigned to the Board of Foreign Missions of his church to take the name of Jesus Christ to a people who were yet to be told about Jesus Christ. It is one thing to go to a mission field where there have been missionaries before, but to go with this great responsibility upon your shoulders, to become the first man to introduce them to Jesus Christ -- this man missionary went out with this dual weight resting upon his heart and his shoulders, and of all things, when he came to a certain island and discharged this obligation, calling together the people for the first time, after much prayer and deliberation he began to tell them about Jesus Christ, and he discovered in the small group of people present a peculiar reaction on the part of one of the hearers. When he was done speaking the man explained, We know him; we have seen him; why, he used to live here; he was with us on this island. The missionary who had constantly reminded himself that he was to be the first to tell about Jesus Christ was completely taken off guard. And because the native showed such utter conviction in his voice -- this island from three to five thousand miles away from Palestine, some nineteen hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ, and the natives saying with the utmost of conviction, We know Him; he used to live here; we know exactly of whom you speak. In the subsequent investigation the missionary discovered that years before there had

been a missionary sent out to the foreign field, but he was stranded by some fate of circumstances on this island, and word had never gotten back to the home church and the missionary of the cross of Jesus Christ had lived on their island -- and now the man comes to talk about Jesus Christ. The native immediately associates him with the man that had lived there. He was synonymous with this new name; he acquainted him with the Jesus, God's great Galilean.

My friends in Jesus Christ, could it not be that the finest tribute to be paid any man is this: When somebody thinks of Jesus Christ, he could think of you. If your mind is big enough, if your faith is strong enough, you can appreciate the title of Every Christian a Christ; every Christian a Christ.

It was Martin Luther who said we could think in these terms -- Every believer becomes a little Christ. So live that when people see you, they may see something of the reflection of Jesus Christ. I would not be too flattered if I were you if somebody always referred to you as a Lutheran. I do not know I would permit my soul to know too much exaltation if somebody always referred to me as a Protestant, proud as I may be of these labels. But if somebody refers to you constantly as a Christian, fall on your knees, my friend. Thank God -- it is showing, people are reading the lines of his love upon your face.

When Henry ^{DRUMMOND} went to ^{NORTHFIELD} to speak to the students there, the man who introduced him said, I want to present to you this morning a man who when you hear him and see him and feel his presence, will remind you of Jesus Christ. The disciples, the followers of Jesus Christ were called "Christian". It was inevitable; it had to come. Like the man of the mountain, the Great Stone Face, the reflection, the revelation will be there.

Lynn Harold Hough once told us about a woman who thought the total of her Christian devotion was in going to Church in an old lavender and lace dress, and when Saturday night came she looked at it, and when Sunday morning came she got it down from the hanger and put it on and off she went to Church neatly and walked the aisle quite gingerly in her lavender and lace. When Church was over she went right home, took off the lavender and lace dress, put it back in the closet and there it remained until

the next Sunday. I am not sure that anyone will ever call you "Christian" if that is about the extent of your Christian devotion. If anyone is ever going to get the label of "Christian", it is not by lavender and lace -- it will be because people

dragging out into the street an ungodly sinner in
his devotion to Jesus Christ.

There is something laughable about people -- something quite laughable about people on the other side of the water, the communists who try to ascertain who are Christians in their community. They hide themselves behind trees on a Sunday morning, then they take out a piece of paper and mark down the names of the people who go to church. Oh, I am not short-changing the bravery of those folk who defy the communists and openly go to Church on Sundays, but if the communists believe that the only way to be a Christian is by checking the names in the Parish registry, by checking to determine whether or not the people go to church,

The sure test of a man's Christian devotion is what happens to him outside these walls, and the sure test of a man's Christian devotion isn't what happens on a Sunday morning, for it should be what happens on a Monday, a Tuesday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, a Friday or a Saturday. The disciples were called Christian, not because they were counted in a Church, but they found them in the market place.

And the last thing to be said is this

It was in Antioch; well, let me tell you about Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, a hustle and bustle of life. It was an ungodly city where people were not friendly towards Jesus Christ. That is where they got the label. True Christianity is not a cloistered virtue. We may have to fall upon our knees before sacred altars, but we can never stay there. If any man's Christianity is worth anything, it is worth LIVING giving (?) out, and the only Christianity the people may be able to know is the Christianity which you live where they are. It would have been so easy to have stayed in Jerusalem; so easy to have kept their Christianity to their prayer meetings. But again I say to you, they got the name "Christian" in Antioch, a pagan city, a

city, a place that was not friendly to the Christian cause.

So I bring this sermon to a close. My parting thought as this, the first series on this basic Christian pattern concludes, is this: How many people when they think of you can not divorce you from Jesus Christ? How many people when they think of you see somehow the reflection of God's great Galilean? If the sermon series has served any purpose at all, it should serve to bring us to that point. Beloved, as your Pastor, as the shepherd and bishop of your souls, I raise the question. How many people when they think of you will say, "The name that best describes that person is 'Christian'". I raise the question. I cannot answer it for you.

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The multitudes that went before and followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest. And do you think for one single minute that he would be as uncomfortable as you and I would have been had we been there and a part of the crowd? There is something vexing about a crowd; there is something so questionable about it. Not all of us, not all of us are willing to trust the crowd. They shout their Hosannas, but do they know why? They shout their Hosannas, but do they know what it is that they shout?

This is a difficult thing to do, but I should like, as best I can, to understand the mind of my Master when on that Palm Sunday so long ago he found himself with the throngs round about on every side.

It must have been a glorious day in Palestine. Some who had seen it say that there was no blue in all of the world like the blue that is found near the Mediterranean. On a beautiful day the crowds came to greet God's great Galilean, and the sun might have been as a golden ^{sphere} beating down unmercifully on these people, and the lane that they traveled was a dusty one. And Jesus is the center of attraction. You can't appreciate a mass of people if you look at them superficially -- maybe that is why we have so much trouble in appreciating a mob of people. We try to evaluate them in the mass, and you simply cannot get a true picture of a mob by trying to understand it in the mass. It could be that Jesus Christ, the center of attraction, was trying to evaluate that crowd of people, and to do it he looked at them, person to person, and man to man. What do you believe he saw? It could be that in that crowd he saw one man in particular who seemed to be a bit more nervous and a bit more excited than any other man, and as he moved so anxiously his fingers would go inside his cloak, and Jesus might have seen inside that cloak a dagger. Now it wasn't that the man had come to assassinate Jesus Christ. The man with the dagger in the crowd was a member of a strong political party known as the "Zealots", that had long ago become impatient with Roman rule. They detested those who did the occupying in their

country, and all of them to a man, they had hoped for the day when they could drive the Romans from the hills into the sea -- Let Israel be the established upon the throne. Let the King of David return. And this Zealot who watched this Jesus Christ come, and the people round about on every side, he must have said to himself -- Surely, we can lay our hopes at his feet. We will bend him according to our purpose. We will suit him according to our plans. We will make use of him. It could be that in that crowd more than one man thought the very same thing. And Jesus Christ with all his discerning mind must have focused his attention upon the Zealot. A crowd is made up of people, and some of the people were like this man.

And it could have been that Jesus Christ also discovered in the crowd those who were a part of it and not yet a part of it. They came, listened, perhaps as the widely thousands, Who is it? Where did he come from? Where is he going? What is his ^{angle?} ~~angel?~~ What do these people expect to get out of it? Is his preaching what they say it is? The cautious questioning, being so careful, you see, as not to maneuver himself in a place where he might have to make a commitment. There are people like that in a crowd. They will mill round about, and then perhaps when the issue is being drawn quite closely and definitely, and the decision has to be made, then they begin to edge away from the crowd. But as long as they can be present (?) without commitment, they will be a part of the crowd. Jesus Christ must have discovered people like that when, in trying to ascertain the meaning of the crowd, he would focus his eye upon individuals who represented types. And it might have been that all of a sudden his eye was attracted to a man in his teens, quickly drew away like a ~~weak~~ ^{flushed} rabbit. Who is he? He could be ^{described} ~~tattooed~~ upon no doubt as a member of the "ecclesiastical go-to" the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the ~~representative~~ of the established church. They were keeping their fingers on this upstart from Galilee. They had heard about his preaching and the miracles that he performed. They were greatly troubled that he was turning tradition aside. He was the man who had stood up in front of the people and said, I know what you have been taught, but I say the great . And if people were to follow him, what would happen to their bishops, what would happen to the palaces in which they were living? What would happen to their hold upon the people? And there

were people like that in the crowd, too, who preferred tradition without realizing its value, without even questioning it -- people who are afraid to accept stark naked truth for what it was worth at the mouth of God himself.

It must have pleased my Blessed Lord, and yours, to find every now and then in the crowd a woman who would lift up a child -- perhaps six years of age -- and would say to her child, "Look, look at Him. That is Jesus. He loves you. He came to tell us about the things of God. Look my child, look upon the face of a good man". And if she would have had insight she might have said, "Look, behold the face of God". It must have pleased my Blessed Lord, and yours, to discover that in the crowd there was an old man bent with years, who had done a great deal of thinking in his life, and much of the thinking had been done prayerfully. He looked upon life with the utmost of reverence. He had read some of the sacred scriptures and he had the type of spiritual insight which belongs to those who are pure of mind and pure of heart. It must have been a distinct pleasure to my Blessed Lord, and yours, to notice that in this man, even sitting as of old when he saw Jesus Christ, he could say in spirit, Lord, Now letteth thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. It must have pleased the mind of Jesus Christ to be able to discover that somewhere in that crowd there was a type like like who recognized him for what he was and what he was worth.

And, beloved, why of all of the things that I could choose to share with you on this, my first Palm Sunday in St. Luke Church, should I ask you to look at it this way? For the simple reason that Palm Sunday is repeated in every man's soul and in every generation. And the gross procession isn't simply something that is confined to the long ago; the procession is going on right now, and Jesus Christ is heading your way, and as you stand while he passes by it could be that you could find the echo of your own voice, the reflection of your own soul, in one of the types that I have delineated for you this morning. There are those in our day who know that Jesus Christ is passing by, but they will not follow Him, because, say they, We want action. We want the world changed overnight. We want someone riding upon a charger. And there

are some to whom the religion of Jesus Christ is too slow a thing. I read with a great deal of profit about a man who was in Germany during the years when Hitler was arising to his power. He made it his purpose, this man, to go to a church in Germany where the pulpit was being occupied by a preacher who foolishly had sold himself, body and soul, to Adolph Hitler. He dragged even into the pulpit the party line, and on this Palm Sunday when this man was present in their congregation, he heard that preacher talk about the first Palm Sunday -- how the people came to greet the carpenter's son, and how during the week the crowds quickly disbursed, but with a measure of satisfaction the preacher told that congregation that morning about Adolph Hitler going into Austria with eighty million people behind him, and how that man, Adolph Hitler, would change the face of the world, re-draw the maps, and overnight, at that, and would bring in a kingdom the ^{Third Reich} ~~third rank~~ that would last a thousand years. And the preacher, mark you, in the 20th century, had a hearing because there were those who believed that Jesus Christ was acting too slowly. Here was an erst-while paperhanger who could change the world overnight, and Jesus Christ is saying, I will have to have time; in fact, it may be an eternity. That is how long it may take until I can change some of you. My business isn't changing maps; my business, says Jesus Christ, is changing human souls.

There are some in our day who come as a crowd, but they will not follow him because he moves too slowly. There are some who are curious, and they come to see Jesus Christ go by, but they are afraid to make a commitment. There are some who say, I cannot follow him because it means changing my way of thinking, even changing my life. But you could be the type, beloved, who with the utmost of reverence and adoration⁽¹⁾ say, Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Saviour. I will follow him. Take your choice, my friends. Take your choice. The crowd is made up of people like that, and you are there. But the question is, Which one, Which one, is you?

Sunday, April 15, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shalom

When a famous comedian threw aside his prepared script and brought his radio program to a close in a rather unconventional fashion, he actually felt his audience captivating him as he had never held them in the hollow of his hand before. As I recall his words, he spoke to us in this fashion: We have had a great deal of fun on this program tonight. We have laughed almost endlessly, but before I bring the program to a close, I want to share with you an experience of mine that happened just as I was coming to the studio tonight. My cab had put me down on the opposite side of the street, and as I alighted I found myself in the midst of a storm that had come so quickly. The wind was blowing almost out of nowhere -- it had come so quickly -- and the rain was beating down upon us. ~~Instantly~~^{CI} I followed the crowd, and we went looking for some type of shelter. A handful of us crossed the street and there, while the storm was raging, we found protection and shelter within the enclosure of a building. When the storm had run its course I looked around to see where I had been standing, and I found that I was standing in the portico of a Church, and now what I want to tell you is this: It has occurred to me that most all of us have been experiencing storms assailing us on every side in this day in which we live. Perchance not a physical storm, but the storms of doubt and fear and frustration. I would suggest to you that you go to your Church, for in it you will find shelter, peace, protection.

Now when a comedian speaks seriously, he always seems to speak to people as though what he were saying is gospel truth. People have a way of sitting up and taking note of this serious observation of a man whose business is to make people laugh. I come to this sacred desk this morning to make this observation of his observation. He told only a part of the truth, for we are not fair with God, nor are we fair with the Christian Church if we think of it only as a place of shelter, a place of peace and protection. That is why at first when I thought of this Sunday, known historically in the Christian Church as Good Shepherd Sunday after the Epistle and Gospel for the day, I thought how easy it would be to preach to you a

sermon on the shepherding love of God, a sermon that would denote in small syllables (?) the quiet, the peace, the calm (?) that comes from the Good Shepherd who leads us to green pastures and beside still waters. It would have been a very popular sermon to have preached. But uneasy as I may be at this moment, I am in duty bound to call your attention to the other phase of the shepherd's life. The shepherd to be sure brought his people safely to a place of protection where they could be quietly kept during the dark night and when the storm would be raging on the outside, but that is only a part of the shepherd's role. -- I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and am known of them, and I will bring them to my fold, and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I will lead them by the green pastures. I will lead them by the still waters. I will restore their souls.

I would not rob one bit of glory from this treasured psalm, this passage of scripture universally loved. But I am in duty bound to tell you that there is another side of the shepherd's life. He leads them not only to the quiet place, but if you read the earlier verses in this 10th chapter according to Saint John, you will read there in the third and fourth verses these words: He calls them by name, and he leads them out, and he goes before them. This is the forgotten part of the shepherd's role. The shepherd may come sometime and steer them from their quiet and peace and their calm, for if the sheep remain within the fold forever, they would become so sickly -- they need activity and exercise; they must be taken away from their peace and calm.

And so this morning as I come to you on this, the second Sunday after Easter, I would remind you of the unsettling hand of God. It is a pastor's great privilege sometimes to remind his people that the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ are outstretched, and that the voice to be heard is this: "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are weary and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. My peace I will give to you." To be perfectly sure, that is the offer of Jesus Christ, but on the other hand, what about the shepherd who disturbs (?) the sleep of his sheep, who takes them away from the fold? I have come to remind you of the unpopular side of God. His hand sometimes may unsettle us, and while I treasure the thought of God as the Divine Comforter --

how I cherish Him, the thought of Him as the Good Shepherd, how I think of God as the eternal refuge, the haven for a weary soul -- we are unfair with him if at times we do not focus our eye on the other aspect of the God-head, and see him as the one who disturbs, as the great troubler, as the one who calls us into action and says to us, Get thee up, move forward; there is the world to conquer; there is a battle to be fought.

These are the thoughts that come to me when I read the earlier part of this 10th Chapter of John. "He leads them out and he goes before them." And, therefore, I come to ask you some rather pertinent questions. I have not come to ask you questions as easily answered as these: Have you found Jesus Christ, with the outstretched arms waiting to welcome you and to offer you peace and quiet and calm? I have not come to ask you whether or not you have seen Jesus Christ with the outstretched arms saying, Come, lay down your burden and rest. I have not come to ask you whether or not you have seen Jesus Christ as the divine one who pats your shoulder and soothes away the furrowed brow and gives you quiet sleep. All of these things Jesus Christ will do, and can do, and perhaps you need that it should be so, but on the other hand I must ask you this question: Have you ever come to Jesus Christ asking not so much for an outstretched hand that will caress and soothe you, but have you asked that you might be able to see the finger of God -- that is -- pointing to some new world to conquer and some deed that he is waiting for you to perform? Have you heard Jesus Christ saying to you, It is well that you should fall upon bended knee, but I want you to know you dare not stay there. There is some work to be done and I am waiting now that you should follow me as I lead you hence. Beloved, and I say it with the utmost candor of a Pastor's heart, I who have been called to shepherd you, to be your spiritual adviser, to be your Pastor, I would say to you if the sum total of your religious experience is simply coming to St. Luke on the quiet of some Sunday morning, if this is the total of your religious experience, you have not found God in his (host (?), nor have you come to experience the tremendous joy that belongs not only to one who receives quiet calling, but also to one who sees himself as a warden, who does foot-duty for Jesus Christ. It is always a helpful thing to read

biography, and I wonder if there is any more helpful reading in all the world as biography. Read the biographies of the saints. What is there that they use somewhere a quiet haven, that they mark a path to a cloister. Oh, it was necessary that they get the right perspective, but no saint ever got to be a saint because he stayed within the quiet walls of a shelter he was always falling on his knees. The one who came back from the battle wounded; the men who had given their lives to an outstretched hand. St. Francis of Assisi -- what is his crowning glory? You read his biography. Oh, you might be thrilled for a moment how he gave up his earthly goods, how he turned his back on a name that carried prestige. You might be fairly thrilled when you read about the number of hours he spent upon his knees in prayer. But the crowning glory will most certainly come when you discover St. Francis of Assisi saying, I will get up from my knees, and I will go, and I will find the beggar where he is, and I will help him in his miserable state, not in spite of it but because of it. And if ever you feel humble, you will find yourself humiliated when you find on a certain page, when St. Francis of Assisi finds a leper, and rather than shunning him, St. Francis of Assisi goes to the leper and embraces him, and of all things, he kisses the leper.

The mark of a saint is not the bended knee - it is the forward march of a man who says, I will go after Jesus Christ; I will follow him; I will walk in his steps; I will do his work.

I do not know how much of the gospel record you have been reading since Easter Day, but I hope you haven't forgotten certain words about to captivate your mind and your soul. The gospel record has it that Jesus Christ arose from the dead, and somewhere you will find these words put in this fashion, "He will go before you into Gallilee." Jesus Christ who arose from the dead did not stay and fall upon bended knee before an empty tomb. He got up, and he went after things to perform the work to be done. It is a comforting thing to know that Jesus Christ is going like that for you. It is a comforting thing to know that he is beckoning you to some corner where you can fall down in quiet calm. And what would we do if our God did not whisper

words of comfort and quiet

But it is a courageous thing when Jesus Christ stands by your side and says, Now go. That is it, isn't it? His closing word; his final commission -- Go ye into the world. Teach, preach, baptize. Make disciples. Turn the world upside down.

Beloved, do you realize that ours is an age of comparative calm and quiet? Honestly, it is. Ah, there is a threatening cloud that looms upon the horizon every now and then. But I wager -- if I were a wagering man -- that for the most part, most of us have more of this world's goods and comfort and convenience than any other group of people who have ever lived upon the face of the earth. More things to make us comfortable and peaceful. And therein lies the great danger to the soul. We may be inclined to think that virtue (?) may come ^{thru} the serenity and peace that is born of material things. I am not so certain but that this is a dangerous time in which to live, because it is so easy not to hear the voice of God calling us on into some new world where there is a great work to be done. I cherish as much as any man may cherish the thought that some day Jesus Christ will open for me the gate to Heave. Albeit I shall fall upon my knees to enter. But if my religion is waiting until some day the gate of Heaven will open, how then will the kingdom of God ever come upon earth except as there are men and women now, at this time and in this day, turning to him and saying, Where will you lead me now? And I suppose that is the question of questions to be faced.

I ask, how long has it been since you have turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and have said, Jesus, what is it that you want me to do today? What new assignment is there that is waiting for me? How long has it been since you have turned to Jesus Christ and said, Take over, Jesus Christ, show me what it is that you want done. Show me where it is that you want me to go.

To the contrary, Give me peace; give me pardon; give me patience. These are the things for which we ask. The peace and pardon and patience have no meaning unless they come to a soul that has been hurt in some kind of trouble, and Heaven itself can become a meaningless thing unless somewhere in the thick of things here in this world we caught a glimpse of it as we have striven for it by His might and by His power.

I know what you are thinking, and I would not criticize you one bit for it.

The preacher is generalizing; he is simply laying down one general suggestion after another. What is it that he expects me to call by name? What is the thing that he expects me to do once this service is over, that is new, different and daring and bold, for Jesus Christ? Why doesn't he tell me that? Why doesn't he show me the direction in which he thinks God wants me to move?

Why don't I talk like that? For the simple reason that I have no authority to talk like that. I cannot tell you the exact thing that Jesus Christ wants you to do, but this I can say, that people are as different as people are different. With all my heart and all my soul, I believe it. That there is some specific contribution that Jesus Christ wants you to do that only you can do. And if you do not do it, it will not be done. That I most certainly believe. And while I cannot tell you just what it is that God wants you to do, or where he wants to lead you, I can most certainly declare that if you are willing to be led, and if you will still your soul that you may hear, he will speak and he will show you the way. As your Pastor, and as the shepherd of your soul, this is all that I can do, and it could be that for some of you, it may be a bit too much, for human nature shuns from a battle, human nature basically wishes to retreat (?) and the kingdom of God, beloved, belongs only to those who go forth.

Let me teach you, then, a brand new prayer in case you have never prayed it before. It won't be this prayer: Jesus show me thy face. Don't pray that for a change -- for a change, don't pray, Lord Jesus Christ, let me hear Thee speak unto me comforting words of reassuring grace. These things he will do for you without your asking, but if you want a brand new prayer, turn to Him sometime and say, 'Lord Jesus Christ, it isn't your face that I want to see. I simply want to be able to discern the direction in which your finger points.' You pray that sometime, and you might get something that will last you a lifetime. Ask the man who knows.

Jesus is the shepherd who calls by name, who will take you to his shelter of the fold, but the same shepherd that does these things is also the same shepherd that leads you out and guides you and directs you.

Sunday, April 22, 1956

"Pilgrims and Strangers"

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

I hesitate to

~~ask~~ ask myself if it is the proper thing to do or not; nonetheless, I go on doing it just the same. Do you know what it is? I play favorites with the saints. I name them, and then I ask myself, Who among them would I choose to be as my friend? If I had an hour to spend, would I choose this one as over against that one? Matthew, Mark, Bartholomew, James, John, and so the list goes, and invariably I come out calling him Peter. Of all the apostles, he is my favorite, and I think I know the reason why. He happens to be the most human. He made so many mistakes. He was the one, you see, who was always telling Jesus, No matter what other people say, you can always count on me, Jesus. No matter what they will do, Jesus, I will be always faithful. Time and again he was making his declaration of allegiance, and just as often he was stumbling in the way, going down the path in a faltering fashion. Maybe that is why he is my favorite. Because I do believe with all my heart that he was sincere. And while he set his AFFECTION upon Heaven, his feet were made of clay. But that did not frustrate him -- he just went on loving God just the same.

That is why I find myself with a heart that is strangely warm when I come to this Bible lesson for today. Peter was writing a letter to a group of men and women who had embraced the Christian faith. Somewhere up in Asia Minor the letter had finally come, and there must have been a great deal of excitement. Peter, our confessor in the faith. Peter our friend has written us something. Let us read it quickly (?). And as the congregation had assembled, and the letter was being read, I think I would have felt as they must have felt. What does he say? What is he telling us? Ah, then, how quickly they came to these words, Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims. That is highly significant. Peter is telling the Christian congregation in what manner he addresses them, as though they are not to forget who and what they are. It is the voice of experience. Peter must be recalling how at certain times and seasons he had conformed to the way of the world and forgotten who he was and what he had said. Peter himself recalling how he denied his Lord and how the only

way they knew he was a ^{fellow} of Jesus Christ was by the accent of his voice and not by the accent of his personality. If they would not have questioned that Gallilean, they would not have known Peter because remember that there were times when he stooped to the level of the world, when he was not a ^{pilgrim} ~~stranger~~ among people, when he was one of them. And there was nothing distinctive, there was no true mark of the disciple showing, there was no banner being unfurled.

So Peter went to the Christian Congregation, Dearly beloved, I want to think of you as you ought to think of yourselves. A Christian should be a stranger in this world, and a Christian should be a ^{pilgrim} ~~stranger~~. These two words constitute the basis for all that I want to share with you now.

A Christian is meant to be a stranger to this world. The Good Book puts it this way, We are in the world, but not of the world. The Good Book puts it this way, Be not conformed. In case we find it a great deal easier and much more convenient to become as the world is and not to be a stranger.

What is a stranger? A stranger is one who feels ill at ease at certain times and under certain conditions. A stranger is one who is not comfortable in certain places. That is what it is to be a stranger. Ill at ease -- uncomfortable -- not at home. A Christian who finds himself in this world must recognize the somber truth that he must never become too much at home within it. ^{let me} ~~Mark~~ put it for you in a rather blunt fashion -- a Christian is one who ought not to shock easily. A Christian is one who with a sensitive conscience ought to become acquainted with some things that still ^{let me} ~~his~~ soul, prick his conscience and disturb his mind. One of the most uncomplimentary things ever said about our day is this: We are people who do not shock easily.

Beloved, if you have not already done it, perhaps later in the day when you pick up the Sunday paper, if when you go from column to column and read about certain things that are happening in this world of which you are a part, and you do not feel yourself strangely stirred, disgusted, impatient, then there is something wrong with your Christian conscience, because there is enough sin happening in this world to make any of us very, very uncomfortable. And the mark of a Christian -- a sure ~~mark~~

mark is whether or not he finds himself as a stranger with the ways of this world.

A friend of a mine's father was a preacher, and Harold belonged to a fraternity. And Harold, one time giving way to that wicked impulse that can lay hold upon a preacher's son, invited his father to visit the campus and come to the fraternity incognito. He took a great risk, but his father came, and the life in the fraternity house when on very much as it had gone on before. They talked in the same way, they discussed the same sort of details about certain things. And then one of the fellows said to Harold, Who is that chap over there, the stranger in our midst who seems to be so uncomfortable? It is a very ^{family home} ugly illustration, very, very ^{family home} ugly indeed, but the moral remains. Have you ever been detected as a stranger?

WHEN PEOPLE THINK, AND ACT AND TALK THAT WAY?

A Christian was never meant to accommodate himself to the ways of this world.

The Church maintained that the world is apparently (?) chained to the hands of the devil, and so long as we accommodate ourselves to the ways of the world, we level off at sin, flesh and wickedness (?). But a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has come to know God is never meant to accommodate himself to the ways of this world. You can test your Christian conviction, you can test your Christian integrity by a very, very simple yardstick. List the things that shock you easily, that disturb you, that make you feel as though you would not want to remain on that level forever. Now the strange thing about the Christian life is this: Here we are; we are in the midst of it. We cannot escape it. Oh, for an hour or so we may come here, and in less than a half hour you will be turning your back upon these walls and you will go back to the world beyond these gates.

Part of our Christian life may be part of an hour or so here. This is not the end of our Christian witness. It is out there. We have to face it when we go out among those who do not take the name of Jesus Christ, who do not say the things we say and sing the hymns we sing and pray the prayers that we pray. How then will they know that we live it if they cannot sense a difference?

There is another: Dearly beloved, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers.

We are strangers, and because we are pilgrims we were never meant to end our days in this world; we were never meant to stay here. Heaven is our destination, and the Christian is one who is on his way.

A pilgrim is one who is on his way. As soon as he stops moving, he is no longer a pilgrim. As long as he is content to stay where he is, he is no longer a pilgrim. And when Christians are content to be at home in this world, or to stay at home in this world, they are no longer on pilgrimage; they no longer have Heaven as their destination, for to have Heaven as your destination and to be a pilgrim on the way is to keep moving -- to go forward in that direction.

George Bernard Shaw has one of his characters in one of his dramas say to the man who comes to enlist his service in the name of Caesar something like that: I am a believer in God. Caesar is anti-Christ. But God has not yet come to this world, and his kingdom has not yet been established. Although I believe in Him, but Caesar is upon the throne, and in the meantime, I will serve Caesar. Now for about two thousand years there have been far too many "Meanwhile-Meantime Christians", who go on accommodating themselves to the ways of this world and leveling off in the standards of the present level. God's kingdom has not yet come. God is still in his Heaven. Meanwhile, I will serve Caesar. That is a very damaging thing to be said about any man's. It is a dangerous thing, a perilous thing, when he becomes a "Meantime Christian" for it means that he is no Christian at all if he is not in step -- if he is not in step with Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ is the eternal pilgrim; albeit, he is the abiding presence, but he is the abiding presence only to those who are on pilgrimage.

Let me read for you something that ought to almost make you stand on your feet. It is as challenging as this is: Arise, ye prisoners of starvation; arise, ye wretched of the earth (Exclamation mark). ^{For justice thunder} Have ~~just as~~ ^{ought} condemnation; a better world is in the birth. No more traditions' chains which bind us; Arise, ye slaves no more enthralled; the world shall rise on new foundations; you have been ^{marked} marked; you shall be all. (Note to Pastor: Very likely, I do not have this correctly!)

It appeals to you, doesn't it? A new, a better world; a surer foundation ^{com!} for every man. Do you know what that is that I just read? It is the great ^{theme} The Internationale (?) of the Communists. That is what they are teaching their people to sing. They are telling their people, those who embrace the Communist philosophy, Sure, we may ^{wait} for awhile; we may accommodate ourselves for this present world, but set your ^{AFFECTUM} on tomorrow. It is going to come, and when that tomorrow comes, it is going to be ours.

When the Czars went on the throne in Russia, there were small groups of people, the original Communist zeal, ^{five, ten or twelve} ~~5,000, 5,000, 10,000~~ people at a time -- they gathered together. They did not concern themselves for a moment with what was happening in the capital of their land, not what was happening in the world around about them; they simply reminded themselves that someday it would not be that way. They inched forward. They inched forward -- they inched forward a little bit at a time -- a little bit each years, perhaps -- a little bit each year. But they would go on inching forward, and while I do not pose as a historian, if someone were asked to analyze the ^{movement, mark} most of the world in the last fifty years, I would have to say, The Expansion of the Communist line. One country after another coming under the Soviet's ^{influence} ~~(of)~~ ^{sovereign}. How have they? By reminding their people of a tomorrow; by making them pilgrims on the way of another day that is yet to come.

It was August 17, 1947 -- I remember it so well -- it was a Saturday night, and then came Sunday, and I was in Prague in Czechoslovakia. I was experiencing, as I was enroute to another country, The World Federation of Democratic Youth. The Communists had invited 35,000 young people to come to Prague. They were giving them the party line; they were indoctrinating them; they had one program after another. And on that Saturday night when I witnessed a special program, I observed something the like of which I have seldom felt in any church. Up in the balcony there appeared Marshal Tito's representative. And to a man that assembly of young people stood on their feet and shouted, ¹ "STALIN AND TITO" with an enthusiasm the like of which

I have seldom heard Christians saying. It is seldom that I hang my head in shame as a Christian, but I did then. If for a full dinner, if for some tiny piece of land, they can make these people dream and hope, plan and scheme, if they can capture their soul for something as mundane as that -- for shame upon us Christians! You simply

when for us, Heaven is our destination. To be able to see God face to face and to enjoy the full benefits of his Grace. Heaven is ^{at} the end of the road for the Christians. Then why don't ^{we act as though} ~~we are~~ captivated and enthralled by the noble thought?

The noblest soul that I have met in recent years was a goodly woman who lived about two blocks away from where we lived in our former parish. Precious soul that she was, do you know what she was accustomed to doing? She would remind herself each day that someday she was going to go to Heaven, and day after day she made the prayer, Jesus, help me to live this day as becomes a person who is on his way to Heaven. No wonder she made sunshine wherever she went. No wonder she spoke words of kindness, peace and love, for she was simply reflecting the noble dream (?).

Someone has said that a terrible, terrible blow was struck our day when we lost our belief in ^{angels} ~~angels~~; when we ruled out of our thinking these representatives of a spiritual world; when we pushed Heaven farther and farther away from our thinking. I submit to you this morning that if you are inclined to think that this part of a sermon is so ^{vague} ~~vague~~ so vague, so nebulous, if you set your affection ~~(on)~~ on Heaven as a thing, ^{I ask} ~~you~~ you only ^{for} ~~have~~ one hour, to try to live right now and here as though you were already in Heaven. Saints have halos because they have gotten the victory and victory has come the hard way. The hardest job in the world is to live like Jesus Christ right now.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, I want you to remember what it is to be a Christian. And the stranger is one who does not accommodate himself, who does not permit himself to be at home among ~~weak~~ sinful people. And a pilgrim is one, who is on the march, looking -- moving, towards his destination, and as

you. For myself,
long as he keeps moving, he is a pilgrim. I don't know how it is for/ Coming to-
gether here on a Sunday morning is simply a way of gathering reinforcement -- to move
a little bit farther in the right direction tomorrow morning, and a kind of way in
which when we come, we have set our souls to see how much progress we have made in the
past week.

Dearly beloved, I call you a stranger because you are a pilgrim, and a
pilgrim is one who is on his way to Heaven. With all my soul I believe this -- that
Heaven will never come on earth until people set their eye upon Heaven. The French
painter, ~~COROT~~ ^{painter} setting the landscape, the seascape, whatever it might have been, with
those magnificent colorings, do you know where he starts? He always started with the
sky first, because it was from the sky that all other things in the painting got its
rightful shade and meaning.

A pilgrim is one who never takes his eye from his destination, and a Christian
has of all things Heaven for his final

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Sunday, April 29, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

Sermon on Sunday 4th Easter Gospel Lesson John 16:5-7

Now that was a strange thing to That John, the impulsive, that he was a pensive soul, that he possessed when he would think about Jesus Christ coming to this earth, how he met with people by the shores of Gallilee, how he stood there on the summit and preached to them the Sermon on the Mount, how by some he dealt with with Gospel truth; how once he passed by Matthew and said, Follow me, and as he came to the men mending their nets, he had conversation with them, called them by name, and how eventually he found men who were to be by his side, to walk together, to talk together, to become a part of the band. Oh, When John Bunyon thought about that, he felt himself a bit *cheated*. Why couldn't it have happened to him? Didn't he love Jesus? Didn't he love God? Wasn't he a dedicated man? Didn't he say that he would like to be seen in the very presence of Jesus Christ? Sensitive soul that he was, why couldn't it have happened to him? Why couldn't he have been Matthew, Andrew, Simon Peter?

Sympathetic
I am ~~sensitive~~ to the attitude of John Bunyon, for as a lad in Sunday School I used to sing a hymn, How I wished that I could have been with with him there; and stanza by stanza the hymn completed (?) for us those pictures of Jesus Christ in Gallilee. I, too, was an impressionable Sunday School youngster, and I used to think how wonderful it would have been if I could have been there.

Now when I come to this text which is a part of the Gospel lesson for our day, I find my soul puzzled. Jesus Christ is saying to the men who were with him, It is better for you if I were not with you. What shall I make of it? Jesus Christ having spent three years with the disciple band now says to them: It is inexpedient for you that I go away. You will be better off without me. What shall I make of it? Is John Bunyon wrong? Is my sensitive soul on the wrong path? Jesus, what do you mean when you tell the men who were privileged to be with you that they would be far better off without you?

In the plan of God, the time had come that Jesus return to Heaven. He

had spent three years with the disciple band. He had taught them so much. Now it must have been made plain to him, by the very mind of God itself, that the disciples were depending too much upon him - his eternal presence. It was so easy for them to turn to him and say, Master, Speak to ~~his~~ ^{this world} the world. Master, Give us the answer; solve our problems. And there are pages in this Bible text -- I admit to this very day as I read --- how on occasions they came to Jesus Christ, recognizing Him as the one who had the perfect answer for every problem, and would you believe me, you who

to the intention of the scriptures, would you believe me, that there were certain occasions when he sent them away without a hard and fast rule, when there were certain times that he sent them away without the answer -- and they go their way as perplexed and discouraged as they came. But as they journeyed they think. And as they thought, something of his spirit, then they discovered a formula and they find the pattern. It is only as Jesus Christ was removed from them externally, that his external presence was taken away that God's presence was able to enter into their lives. That is the thing we must remember. Greater than looking Jesus Christ in the eye, physically speaking, is the ability to be able to ~~perceive~~ ^{receive} him spiritually. Greater than to be able to touch his hand, is the ability to be able to feel the ~~that~~ of God within a man's soul. That is the greater blessing.

It took me quite a number of years until one year I made a journey to Palestine, and I stood ~~in~~ ^{at} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~garden~~ ^{garden} and I went to the , and I knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane, and I tarried reverently in the resurrection ~~darkness~~ ^{garden}, and not until then could I realize that Jesus Christ was no more real to me there than he had been in the quiet communions in the soul elsewhere. Then it occurred to me that Jesus Christ in the flesh is nothing to be compared with Jesus Christ in the spirit. For now I say to myself, This, disciple band, how they would have loved to have kept Jesus Christ in Nazareth, in Capernaum, in Jerusalem, in Bethany. How they would have loved to have recognized Jesus Christ and kept him to themselves. And suppose God, suppose God would have answered their fancy and their whim; suppose God would have kept Jesus Christ perpetually in the flesh. And suppose to know Jesus Christ you would have to get up from Silver Spring and go 5,000 miles and visit the Holy Land,

and not until you could go there, would you be able to meet Jesus Christ? What kind of spiritual experience would you have? How could you pay tribute and praise to a God like that, where to see Jesus in the flesh becomes , where to worship him you must go to a certain spot?

It was the risk that the disciple band was running that Jesus Christ had to herd (?) them and say, I am going away that you may never lose me; I am going away so that you may lift your eyes from a person to a principle; that you may lift your eyes aside from my teachings to my truth.

There were those in that day who were completely captivated by his personality and they believed what he said because they believed on him. The contrary side is also true. There were those in his day who did not believe in him and, therefore, they would not believe what he said. And there were times when Jesus Christ, realizing the personal animosity that was arising against Him said, Then, if you can;t believe me because of me, believe me because of the things that I do. Jesus Christ in the flesh was becoming a stumbling block to the program and principle of Jesus Christ. So limited is human vision, so limited is the human concept of things as they are.

There are times when I read certain columns in a newspaper, and I say to myself, I should like someday to meet this writer personally. I think perhaps I could better understand this column if I knew this person. But on the other hand, have I not come to appreciate the somber truth that not knowing a person, but guided ? the fancies (?) of certain whims and personalities, I am far better off, for here when I read the column I take it from the truth that stark and naked truth with which I have to deal.

Maybe I would have gone to Gallilee; maybe I would have tarried there,' Present there I would have been captivated by his personality, and I could have gone away talking about his dark skin, his bronze features. I could have gone away talking about the searching eyes, talking about his , but these things I do not know. I am reasonably certain that the color of his hair was brown, and I am reasonably certain that the color of his skin was dark, and his eyes would penetrate to the very depth of a man's soul. Whether his voice was harsh or soft, I do not know. But one

thing that I do know is that his word was truth and he stood and he lived for truth. And he said, Now I am going away that this very truth of God may be yours -- stark, naked truth -- That it should be yours. It is expedient for you that I go away that God will send therefore his spirit of truth that will lead and guide you in all things.

Now there is a little bit of light here, and a bit of light there, and I begin to understand. It is one thing to believe that the God of Jesus Christ of Mary and of Joseph and of Nazareth and Capernaum, but it is an entirely different thing to believe in the Jesus Christ of the saints that I have already come to know in this congregation. (Note to Pastor -- This paragraph not quite clear in transcription, eh?) It is one thing to believe in Jesus Christ of Gallilee, of Mary and Joseph --- it is entirely different and even more pleasant to believe in the Jesus Christ who has come alive and in spirit in your soul -- in your soul -- in your soul.

One day there was a boy who came to a mission hospital in China, leading his grandfather, who was -- so it appeared -- blind, and as he came to the door of the institution of mercy, he said, "Is this Christ's hospital?" And the attendant said, "Yes." The boy said, "I would like to see Jesus, for I have brought my grandfather who is going blind." What would you have done had you been the attendant? -- A tender-minded boy looking for Jesus Christ in Christ's hospital. And the attendant thoughtfully waited for a minute, and said, "Come this way, my lad," and the attendant took the boy with the grandfather to the doctor in charge. And the doctor came, and felt that the grandfather of the boy, and in due process the operation for the removal of the cataracts was effected and the man could see. It is Christ's hospital and Jesus Christ was there in spirit in the heart and soul of a man. That was something that that youngster could understand rather than to have been told, "No, lad, Jesus Christ is over in Palestine in a little village there called Capernaum, Nazareth, Bethany -- is where he is. But God wanted Jesus Christ to be everywhere in the hearts and souls of people. That is why he sent the Holy Spirit to bring him. I remember as a lad, quite well at that, back in 1929 when there was the

eclipse of the sun --- how we looked for it. But the impression that came/at that
time was to me but I do remember reading in a newspaper about a editor
in Buffalo, New York, who wrote about the eclipse of the sun and placed it under the
column entitled "Local News", as though Buffalo had the primary claim to the
eclipse of the sun. So that him people in the newspaper world. But
I say to you there is the other side of the truth that is not to be overlooked.

by the people of Buffalo in Buffalo could they
appreciate the eclipse of the sun in the universe.
but the spirit of Jesus Christ in all parts of the world had come to Jesus Christ
only

Beloved, Jesus Christ turned his back on Andrew, Mark and Bartholomew in
Palestine and went away from them that they could someday discover that they could
never lose him. Jesus Christ turned his back on Judea and Gallilee so that he
might come and live in the hearts and souls of the people of Montgomery County.

Sunday, May 6, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

"Now you are talking," says the proverbial man on the street, "When you put it that way. I can begin to understand what you mean by religion." Someone, you see, had quoted to him that closing verse of the scripture for today. It is the 27th verse of the First Chapter of the General Epistle of James -- Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

That is something practical. I can see this. So speaks the proverbial man on the street -- and by the way, what does he know about our religion anyway, except he see it as we live it beyond these walls? There are many people who will never come with us to Church. They do not own a prayer book. They will not read the Bible. They have no interest in erecting such temples as yours, as lovely as this one. They will not teach in the Sunday School. They do not read religious literature. How will they know anything about our religion since they do not come where we find our souls being fed by it? They only way they can know anything about our religion is when they take note of it when we are away from the altar and when we have gotten ourselves up from our knees and go walking where they are.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: And then James gives us a very practical definition of what religion actually is. If, my friends, you count ^{as} ~~the~~ ^{religious experiences} sum total of your ~~religion~~ this coming together on a Sunday morning, you are mistaken. This is not the end of our religious experience. This is only the place where you are motivated; this is only the place where the touch of Jesus comes to a man's soul and transforms him and sends him away from an altar to walk in the midst of people where there is great need and then do something about it.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, the great N.Y. preacher, once was making a tour in the Near East. Word had gotten around that he was coming -- I have forgotten whether it was to Beirut, Cairo or Jerusalem, but that does not make any difference. He was invited to speak at the assembly program of this international university. It was ^{that} made very plain to him/when he got up to speak, his audience would be a bit suspicious.

He was coming, in the first place, as a preacher, and in the second place, they would look upon him as a Christian. The congregation, or the assembly, was made up of at least seventeen different brands of religions -- one phase or another. There was the Mohammed; there was the Hebrew; there were Christians; there were people who were heathens -- and so the list went. The man who was to introduce Harry Emerson Fosdick told him in advance, "You will have to break down the boundary because they will think that as a Christian you are coming to change them and their religion." Wise man that he was, Fosdick stood up, faced the congregation, and began with these words: "I have not come here this morning to ask any man to change his religion. I have come to ask this question -- Is your religion, whatever it is, changing you?"

Ah, that is the important thing. What does this religion you profess do to you? And, what is more, what does this religion that you profess do through you? What do people notice after you have turned your back upon an altar? It is a tremendous thing for a man who was called to be the spiritual adviser to a people, each Sunday morning to usher the congregation into the very presence of God. As long as I may be privileged to be the Pastor of this congregation, I honestly pray that God will never allow for one single service the glory (?) of my responsibility to grow dim -- to walk with you, to lift you into the very presence of Almighty God. That is a tremendous task. By the very same token, I submit to you, and I hope that by this time you have caught something of it, that as your Pastor I recognize not only the responsibility to usher you into the presence of God, but also to drive you away from the altar -- to push you; to motivate you into action, and once you have gone from the altar you may ^{live} give (?) out where need is so great the very thing that you so magnificently professed within the beauty of Saint Luke Church. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this -- and mind you, James does not talk a single thing about a Church service; he makes no mention about the singing of hymns; he does not talk about the prayer book; he does not talk about an altar. When James was talking about religion, he was talking about religion itself and what it becomes to people where they may be; when they were not before an altar/

I have the firm conviction that people ought to come to Church. I believe that

very definitely there is a certain something that takes place here that does not take place any other time and in any other way. By the very same token, if this is the sum total of your religious experience, there is something wrong with your religious experience. You come here only that you should go away from this place a better person and enabled to transform the world that you are going to face beyond these doors.

I cannot quite remember where I read it -- whether it was a poetic interpretation or the result of a novel, but at any rate I remember so well the story of a man who was a devout worshipper in the Russian Orthodox Church, and when he went to church, invariably he would make (?) the prayer, and at first , it is a magnificent thing to pray, "Oh, God, Lord Jesus, reveal thy face to me. Oh, God, Lord Jesus, reveal thy face to me." To be able to see the face of God! (Exclamation point). A magnificent prayer, and yet there is something wrong with it. Beloved, you can't pin-point God; you can't shove him into a corner -- This, this is God. No matter how earnest your soul may be, you cannot tell him before an altar, what I am about to behold now is God all by Himself; God in his entirety; God in the perfection of his beauty. And, I will tell you why I say that: Because all of the time this devout worshipper was praying, "Oh, God, reveal thy face to me; let me see the beauty of the face of the Lord Jesus Christ" -- all the time he was making that prayer, there was a mighty procession of faces in front of him, a parade of human beings, and how did they come before him -- they were the lame, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the beggar, each one limping along in his misery. And all the time the devout worshipper was saying, "Oh, God, reveal the face of thy son, Jesus Christ to me even now" -- and it was not the face of Jesus Christ. But rather the parade of the miserable of man in all their sufferings, anxieties and needs.

Be careful, beloved, when that earnest heart of yours asks to see the face of God. This is what you could see, and if I may say it, you will never see Him aright

unless you see it this way ~~as~~ the procession of the humble, the ill-clad and the unsaved.

I hope you have not forgotten it -- it was that middle hymn, known as the Sermon Hymn, No. 235. If you want a picture of God, read that hymn again. You will find God in Jesus Christ wherever there is need and hunger; wherever there are the unsaved. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father ~~may be~~ seeing the face of God in some quiet corner where the soul can be hushed. That happens only for this reason: That once that thing happens, you turn your back upon Him and you see all of God's children everywhere, and as they are there, like as not there will always be a need.

"Now you are talking," says the proverbial man on the street, "When you put it that way. That is the kind of religion I can understand. That means something to me."

MOLL

I remember Edwin ~~Meyer~~ (?), one of the great men of our Church who was charged with the responsibility of going to Jerusalem and being the director for the Near East Branch of the Lutheran World Federation. ~~There are no~~ *Moll* ~~in Edwin Meyer's~~ ~~care for such~~. I wish someday you could get to meet him, if you have never had that privilege before. ~~Meyer~~ *Moll* went to Jerusalem -- let me put this in parentheses for you, will you? The Lutheran Church had title to about fifty million dollars worth of property there. We were not so sure that we could hold it, especially during the days, the weeks and the months of the terrible war between the Arabs and the Jews, but the Lutheran Church and Edwin ~~Meyer~~ *Moll* felt that these agencies were to be used to promulgate the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Christian church should keep them in her possession. Here is a man that he is, in the risk of losing his life, he came and slept night after night before the very altar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Edwin ~~Meyer~~ *Moll* was a warrior, a soldier for Jesus Christ, and a remarkable saint. One day the King of the ~~Arab~~ *Haslemite* ~~Kingdom~~ *Kingdom* ~~and (x) King~~ of the Jordan, invited Edwin ~~Meyer~~ *Moll* to come to see him. He wanted to

thank him in person for the wonderful work that was being done there among the Arabs, the various ministries of mercy being carried on, and after he had thanked Edwin ~~upper~~ ^{mell}, -- and, incidentally, he was thanking you because we are God's working arm (?), we are the Lutheran's world action; when the king was thanking ~~upper~~ ^{mell}, he was thanking every Lutheran who sent something where the need was so great. Before the conference came to an end, the king said to ~~upper~~ ^{mell}, "Have you ever been curious about what I think of the Christian religion?" Of course, Edwin ~~upper~~ ^{mell} was curious; he has a curious mind; and he told his majesty that he was curious, realizing that his majesty was a devout worshipper. The king said, "Listen, I will tell you what I think of the Christian religion, because I must tell you what I think of it on the basis of what I have seen. What do I know about the Christian religion? I go round about the City of Jerusalem on certain occasions, and I see these processions of the priests, the Greek Orthodox, the ^{Copts}, the Roman Catholic Church. Here they come, traveling this sacred path, going from one sacred site to another, and as they come, they sing, they chant, they look neither to the right nor the left. I have seen them in their religious procession. And with what cheer the king must have said that: I have seen them in their religious procession, looking neither to the left nor to the right. And all about them constantly was the sign of poverty and despair; never smiling upon the beggar; never touching a hand to lift the man who was lame. "And all of that," he said, "in the name of religion. What do I know about your religion? Reports come to me how they go to the sacred sites and priests fight among themselves as to who shall guard the sacred part (?) in the Church of the Nativity. I see the priests warring among themselves in the very place that marks the site of the very place of the Prince of Peace. You ask me what do I know about your Christian religion? ^{This is what I see.} What can I think?" And recognizing the feeling that Edwin ~~upper~~ ^{mell} must have had because he was a devout believer in ~~the~~ Jesus Christ, the king went on. But hold on, I must tell you something more -- One day in the city of Jerusalem after the

noon procession, the donkeys and camels, they were coming with their packs, and I dispatched a ~~man~~^{new} of mine to go, and I said to him, find out for me what is the meaning of this caravan; what do they bring to Jerusalem? Eventually the man came back, and he said, Your majesty, they carry, these donkeys and these camels, they carry barrels (?) and -- and they are labeled L.W.M., Lutheran World ^{Relief} Action, and they contain medicine, clothing, cartons of powdered milk. Said the king, the Ashmalite king, to Dr. Edwin ~~Waser~~^{Waser}, "This kind of religion I can understand; this kind of religion makes sense to me." And, by the way, it is an established fact that that is the only reason they tolerate us Christians in Jordan today. Ah, don't be quick to make that judgment. It is not because they accept ~~the~~^{they} ~~because~~^{because} we come bearing gifts. Necessary as that may be but it is something they are in duty bound to respect, because here is a religion which comes and says, we ask only for the privilege to put our creed into ; to put into practice what we profess. said the King of the ~~Arab~~^{Hebrew} ~~tribes~~^{tribes}, Kingd~~om~~^{om} of the Jordan, "That kind of religion I can respect; that kind of religion I can understand."

And by the very same token, I come to you this morning to re-~~in~~ⁱⁿ you that the great arena is beyond this quiet spot. The world as a spectator waits on the outside. They will judge your Christianity, not by the hymns that you have sung, not by the sacred aisles that you have walked; not by the prayers that you have prayed. They will not ask to see your hands folded in prayer. But they will stand at attention, they will stand and salute the hand that is outstretched to help a brother in need.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unperturbed from the world. It appeals to you, doesn't it? And you are willing to to that kind of religion.

It delighted my soul a great deal yesterday when we took the Confirmands on an all-day tour to nearby Lutheran institutions. Our first stop was the Deaconess Wetherhouse, the training school at Huxton, just outside of Baltimore. I told the

boys and girls that this is where we train young women to become deaconesses. They are married to the Church. They become servants of our Lord. And I think for a moment they thought they were going to see ^{people} with a long face, people going around with folded hands. And, lo and behold, they were introduced to a young woman who had been recently invested, entitled to wear the garb of the Church as a servant of our blessed Lord -- when she came before them in the Chapel -- of all things, what was she wearing? she was wearing jeans! And the thing took at once with the boys and girls -- a religion that can be put into overalls; someone that can go around and dust and clean up a place; their religion that can be put into action -- it has an appeal for all of us.

But, I would warn you, Beloved, and I am really ending now at the point at which I ought to begin -- you cannot have a religion like that without the spiritual *dynamics* without the *motivation* that comes from the imprint of the Lord Jesus Christ upon your soul. You have to know Him first before you can act like Him. I am constrained to tell you that even when Jesus Christ was here on earth, there were lots of people who did not understand what he was talking about. Even when he tried to give them unforgettable pictures of God, they could not understand. And one day there was a writer of the record of Jesus Christ who knew very well that what he once put in his book, there would not be a single soul anywhere who could not help but understand. When he referred to Jesus Christ in this instance he said, He went about doing good.

I am your Pastor, Beloved. I am the shepherd and the spiritual adviser of your soul. ~~Go on doing as you have done this way;~~ give me a picture of one soul after another on bended knee, calling here in this place upon the name of the Lord. Give me that picture, the people of Saint Luke Sunday after Sunday -- but don't you dare step. Alongside the picture, the hand folded in prayer -- give me your picture with that very same hand stretched out to a brother in need. Then you will have Pure religion and undefiled before God.

SAINT LUKE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Silver Spring, Maryland

May 13, 1956

Let me begin this sermon this morning by giving you the last sentence first. This is how this sermon is going to close. "Bless, O Lord, this home. Keep it always a household of faith where Thy name is revered, Thy truth declared, and where Thy love is shared. Amen."

Today, as you know, is the second Sunday in May. It is being increasingly observed as the Festival of the Christian Home, and rightly so, for the Christian church has come to recognize the somber fact that the greatest single ally of the Christian church is the Christian home. All that we are able to do, we are able to do because of the foundation upon which we build, the foundation which is laid at the family circle. The altar in any church has meaning only as there is raised in a family circle the altar at the hearth. Because this is true, it is significant, then, that the title of this morning's sermon should be "When Is a Home Christian?" For I hesitate to tell you, sometimes we in the Christian church must do our work not because of the home but in spite of it, and not every home measures up to the Christian standard.

What I told you is to be the ending of this sermon, is in reality a prayer, a prayer which I have chosen to use whenever I am privileged to cross the threshold of your home. I have arranged a kind of calling schedule that may take me two years, perhaps, at the most until I have been in every home in this parish, but it's on the schedule. What with so many other things that demand time, you see, there isn't always opportunity to call on three homes in an afternoon, but the schedule is there. And when I do come to your home, invariably this is what I want to do, after the visiting: to ask God's blessing upon your home, and let me remind you again what that prayer will be. "Bless, O Lord, this home. Keep it always a

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household of faith where Thy name is revered, where Thy truth is declared, and where Thy love is shared."

Now there you have it, my friend. Everything that I'm going to tell you in this sermon is going to swing around these three points. For these three things constitute in this one man's mind the measuring rod by which we ascertain whether or not a home is Christian. When our Blessed Lord was a boy, frolicking upon the streets of Nazareth, what delight His young soul must have enjoyed when He visited in certain homes. There were certain places in which he must have been made to feel very, very much at home. (Ah, by the way, let me tell you right now in parentheses, there's a good definition for a Christian home; a home in which always Jesus Christ can be made to feel at home. A Christian home is a home in which always Jesus Christ can be made to feel at home.) When Jesus was that boy in Nazareth, He must have known a great measure of delight in going to certain places where He was made to feel at home, where He wasn't at all uncomfortable, where He was always at ease, and I think one thing--the home that met that requirement of making Jesus feel at home was always a home where the name of God was revered, where God was a part of the vocabulary and reverently so.

We are trying to do a satisfactory job of it here in Saint Luke Church. The same thing, I suppose, could be said of almost any parish congregation. The Pastor is dedicated to the preaching of the truth, trying to teach people to revere God and His name, His day, and His house. Our Sunday school teachers are committed to the same measure of responsibility, trying to instill reverence in the minds of those who are yet so plastic, so formative in their years. But I'll tell you one thing: when as the Pastor I come into this church, into this nave, with some of the boys and girls, and if they come reverently, if they talk in hushed tones before this altar, if there is something of the awe in their eyes as

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they come within this sacred spot, then I say to myself, "Somewhere, someone has taught them to be reverent." And when, after I've crossed the threshold, the tiny tots come and they're a part of the little circle in which the prayer is going to be made, if when they've overcome their shyness they eventually do bow their heads and fold their hands in prayer, then I say to myself, "Someone has taught these children reverence," and I say to myself, "When it is taught in the home the impression remains and becomes a lasting thing." And I'm wondering if there is any greater thing that we can do for our children than to teach them the fundamental aspect of reverence, for a man is known by the thing that he reveres. Tell me how a man treats his wife, and I'll tell you the kind of husband the daughter in that home will choose to be her mate. We have a way of sensing things, certain things have a way of rubbing off on us, and when a child is taught reverence for God, it has a way of taking.

I remember a contribution that my mother's mother made on my life. As I remember she came to visit us only once; then, facing the sunset slope of life I never saw her again. She couldn't speak much English but she made an indelible mark upon my soul, something for which I hope that I will always be grateful. Like all curious boys I tiptoed past her bedroom in the morning before she had gotten out of bed and the door happened to be ajar and I peered through the open door and what did I see? I saw her sitting upright in bed fingering the rosary; she was a devout Roman Catholic. I never knew anything about the Roman Catholic Church at that time and I knew little about her, but I did know that each day before she got out of bed, each day before she did anything else beyond her couch, she turned her thoughts God-ward, giving Him the reverence that belonged to His name and at this day then that she was going to enjoy, she enjoyed by the hand of God and whatever sleep she had during the sleeping hours she enjoyed because the hand of God was merciful. She never said a word to me about God, she never

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talked to me about Jesus Christ. All I have is a precious memory of a woman who turned her thoughts God-ward at the beginning of the day. Beloved, memories do not just happen. They are forged, they are fashioned, they are the process, the result of a development. What kind of memories should you and I be building up these days that the man shall remember from the day of childhood? A home is Christian when the name of God is revered.

I'm sorry that it's gone with the passing scene; I think it's a great loss to us in many ways, but then of course it's a matter of taste, I presume. But there was a day in most family parlors or dining rooms, there would hang upon the wall that religious motto--oh, I'll grant you some of them were not very good artistically, but the sentiment and the truth was there. Did you have one in your home? "Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." There is something to be said when a married couple, when of all the things they would choose for their walls, they'd choose a religious motto because they wanted to remind themselves that no matter what happened around that table, no matter what happened in that home, it should be as if in the presence of God whose presence was always to be revered. When is a home Christian? You can begin at that point. A home is Christian when the name of God is revered. And once Jesus Christ took a rather obstreperous group of people to task when He said, "You're dishonoring me. I honor God, and when you dishonor me you dishonor God." A holy obligation resting upon Jesus Christ was always to give God the reverence that belonged to Him. How much, how much has your home contributed to making your child a reverent child? Blessed indeed is that mother who enters a room sometimes and sees a child completely fascinated by the rays of the sun upon the bedpost and the child is there completely entranced, and just the way that child will be talked to by its mother, the child will even have thoughts of God. I once knew a father who whenever

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there would be any degree of lightning, do you know what he would do? He'd take his children to the window, he'd kneel alongside of them and he'd say, "Look! Watch it! The Heavens declare the glory of--God!" So many avenues by which we can take to see that the name of God is revered.

"Bless this house, O God. Keep it always a place where Thy name is revered, Thy truth declared..." I hope the boys and girls who come to Saint Luke Sunday school remember the lessons of truth that we try to teach them. I covet for myself a generous portion of their esteem. I hope that as their Pastor they will quickly learn to know that I love them, every single soul of them, but by the very same token I hope that some day they'll look back and remember that when their Pastor came to this pulpit, he preached to them the truth--that there was no question about it, this is what the Lord desires, this is what the Lord wants us to do, no deviation, no compromise from the principle of God's truth. But, beloved, these things are not simply delegated to the Sunday school teacher and to the pastor. In the family circle God waits for the parents, waiting for them that they should guide the children in the way of truth. It's a lamentable thing, I tell you, when sometimes we in the church try to lead and guide boys and girls in the right path and then at home they are given the utmost freedom to choose something of lesser worth. When it's a case of the confirmation class as over against something else, where is the parent who steps forth and says, "Yes, but we are obligated to take this and do this for Jesus' sake. This is the truth of God inherent in this specific case."

Someone asked me one time what fifteen years in the parish ministry had taught me, and among other things I could say that, generally speaking, once boys and girls had reached the age of reason, they followed pretty largely the pattern that their parents had set for them, that generally speaking once they had reached the age of reason, they had a conscience for those things for which their parents

had a conscience, they respected the truth of God pretty largely to the same degree that their parents respected the truth of God. Therefore, I charge you as I charge myself as a parent--how often are we hewing the line, how often are we taking the straight and narrow path by which the truth of God is brought to bear in full focus? Beloved, if we do not, who will? If we parents can play fast and loose with the Christian gospel, then where will the child expect a Christian to begin or end? A Christian home is a place where the truth of God is made known and declared, and happy is the child whose recollection of the teaching of God is definitely linked with the family circle.

Then I must tell you this. A Christian home is a place where the love of God is shared, where the love of God is put into practice. Sometimes we say, "Oh, I scatter my shot too broadly, I touch too many people, I haven't opportunity to let down at one particular point and give everything that I have to those people closest at hand. I wish I could." And then all the time God has placed us in families, all the time God has already answered that prayer, and He says, "Here, here is a tiny group, here is a group which is confined, this is where you are to put the Christian religion into practice. You are to begin your Christian profession at home. Here are those with whom you can begin at once." And as we ask God to show His love toward us, God says, "All right, now you can put that love into practice right here, now, and with those closest at hand." And compulsion is laid upon my soul to tell you now that if you cannot be a Christian at home, chances are you cannot be a Christian anywhere else. If the love of God through your life does not begin to flow with those closest at hand, then chances are it won't begin to flow very freely anywhere else, at least generally so. I can't recall the man who said it, but he said, "The home should be the scene of our greatest opportunities and oftentimes it becomes the scene of our greatest failures." It is a bitter indictment against some men when it is said that they

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treat their employees or their office staff with more Christian grace and courtesy than they treat the members of their own household. It is a bitter indictment against some so-called good and decent people when it is said that they have more patience with the youngsters in their Cub Pack than they have with their own children at home.

A Christian home should be a place where the love of God is always flowing. You must place upon your list of readings a book entitled "Susannah". I can't give you the name of the publisher; it's been some twenty years since I've seen it for the first time, but I can tell you this: it's a book about the mother of the Wesleys. Susannah Wesley was the mother of seventeen children; John and Charles were her two better-known sons. It was John Wesley who did more for England in his day than any other single soul and he was one of seventeen children. Do you know what Susannah did? She made it known that she never wanted any of her children to ever find beyond their home the thing that they needed most until they first found it at home. She wanted her children to know that the parents of those children loved them, was personally interested in them, each parent. She drew up for herself a schedule, that's what she did. On Monday she had three of the children come and gave them special, undivided, unmitigated attention, no casual thing with her, and while she was mother to all the rest of them, specifically there was bringing to bear on each one of them some undeniable fact of her love and her concern, for, said she, "I will not ask anyone else to give to my children what I myself ought to give to them."

"God, make it ideal for me. Give me a close group of people where I can reveal Thy truth and Thy will," and then what does God do? He gives us the family circle and he says, "There. Put to bear Christian love and concern and good will right there." This is a time for soul searching, and if I should honestly admit that there is one feature about the ministry that I deplore--maybe I'm taking

myself to task now and not the ministry--but by the very nature of my profession and my life, I spend more time perhaps engendering love and good will for people beyond my own family circle than I get done for my own closely knit family group. So many calls, so many meetings to attend, to go and tell other people about God and the love of God, and when the day is ended and finally I get back home, they who should have received first, gather up but the remnants that remain. Call it heresy if you will; I speak the truth at that point. It's a time for soul searching for all of us in this day when there are so many meetings, so many good things that require our time and our concern; and without hesitation I tell you that sometimes I have gone to attend a Board Meeting or a Committee Meeting, even in the name of the church, and I sat there with an uneasy conscience because all the time I knew that for my boy's sake it would have been better for him if I would have been sitting in the bleachers. They are young only once, and there is an insatiable thirst on the part of every child to be loved, and God says to a father and a mother, "In my plan there shouldn't be anybody who could do it better than you."

"Bless, O Lord, this house. Keep it a household of faith where Thy name is revered, Thy truth declared, and Thy love is shared." That's the way I was going to end, but I'm going to add another sentence. Because Jesus wanted it to be that way, one time He gave an unforgettable picture of Heaven and He said it could be like home.

Raymond Shaheen

Transcribed from Tape Recorder
by Ruth P. Doak

Sunday, May 20th, 1956

PENTECOST

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

Do you know what I have done? I have labeled it, "The Second Great Miracle." Let me tell you about the first one. Once, in the long ago, there walked into one village mart after another in faraway Galilee and Judea a carpenter's son. When he talked with people, he talked with them about God. His voice was so clearly put, the accent by which he spoke was so well understood, that after he had spoken, people put their fingers reverently to their lips and whispered the name of God. Once in the long ago there walked in Judea and Galilee a carpenter's son, who when he did good things, did them so well, so very, very that after the thing was done, people likewise put their fingers reverently to their lips and whispered God. That was the first miracle, -- when God saw fit to open the Heavens and to give to earth in flesh and blood himself.

Now, the second miracle is this: When men and women in a subsequent day began to act exactly what Jesus promised, no matter where they went, nor what they did, they were -- and I say it advisedly -- a Christ in miniature. They were God in their day in the flesh -- Jesus living and acting through them. They were transformed men; they were people of the spirit. Now that is the second great miracle. At least, that is the way I label it. I grant you, I have never read it in the Book. I have never known anyone else to put it exactly like that. But in somber moments of reflection, and as I come to this place on this day which is known as Pentecost, and as I recall the lives of those men and women who went from an upper room and began to live like Jesus Christ with the utmost of uncertainty, that I most certainly tell you is a miracle -- first, that Jesus should come to this world, and then, secondly, that men and women should live as he lived, by the spirit and by the power of God.

How do you account for it? Here was a handful of men who had come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then there were ; there were other people who said Jesus Christ is not God. There were people who said to them, You are mad when

you follow him. The popular thing is to serve our God. And to go on behaving(?) like Jesus Christ. You are out of your mind.

How do you account for the fact that in a day when it was not popular to be Christian they were most Godly? How do you account for the fact that men, weak men, men terribly afraid to be transformed

I have the answer, my friends. That is why I have come to this sacred desk this morning; that is what I declare; that is what I now declare to you. I declare with the utmost of conviction. I am saying that which no man would dare keep me from saying. They got that way because when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place. Now all that I am going to tell you centers around that test. It is the opening verse for the Epistle for today. And the test tells us three things. That when these men and women left this room they were transformed men, they were men of power; they were men and women who lived in the spirit of God; they were always sustained by the everlasting arm, and whatever they did, they did in the certain knowledge that God was telling them what to do and what to say.

Now that transformation took place because they had met three requirements, and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. If he had said to them, -- you would never have gotten the answer, It was a very lovely day. It was so nice outside. We simply thought we would go to church. They would not have answered that way. That assembly in the upper room in Jerusalem was not a gathering of people who had easily sauntered in from the street. That assembly in of people in the upper room waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit were not people who had gotten there casually. They were there because they were under orders. They had remembered that Jesus Christ had said to them, Now you tarry. You wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes. And when they gathered together, they were all there because they were under orders, remembering that Jesus Christ had asked them to come. It is my opinion that God is not extravagant with what he needs most to give to us. He cannot afford to waste his power and His grace, and God gives his spirit only to those who are willing to meet the requirements of

obedience. Do you want to know why I tell you that? You can get the answer for yourself if you read the miracles in the pages of the New Testament. the man weak of the palsy that the man was ill. Miracle after miracle waited to be done until there were men and women who would comply with the wish of Jesus Christ. There was Peter with his great Jesus We have tried it; we have done it this way

And when he did what Jesus Christ asked him to do, when he obeyed his Master, the miracle happened. Christians should be people who are classified as folks who are under orders -- under orders to Jesus Christ. One of the lamentable things about our generation is this: That we prize freedom too greatly. Now be careful with what you do with that statement before I tell you what I mean. We allow this measure of liberty or that measure of liberty in so many organizations, and even in the home. There was a day when there was central authority. Even though it is a day that is passed, there is something to have been said in its credit when the man was the head of the house who had central authority. Under God he took his place and he spoke a word. And they all did as the head of the house directed. There is something to be said for obedience and the recognition of authority. Now What I am saying to you I am saying to you parenthetically. Carry it over into the scheme and the plan of the things (or thinking) of God. Miracle after miracle was performed only as men complied to the will of God, and even Jesus Christ upon his knees in the Garden of Gethsemane says, Not my will, but yours.

I do not know how you evaluated your coming here this morning, but I should be very happy if most of us could be able to say, We are here because Jesus Christ asked that the faithful assemble together. I should be very happy if this should be the reason of reasons that prompts you to come to church, because Jesus Christ desires the faithful to do it. ^{When} In the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were there because they were bidden (?) and they had remembered that He had asked them to do that very thing.

In the second place, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, The Good Book says they were all with one accord. Ah, there you have something tremendously

precious. There were all of one kind. There was no division among them when it came to Jesus Christ. There was no division among them when it came to the things of the kingdom, and if you think there they were all the same pattern, you were very much mistaken. There were the great variety of personalities -- the great division of individuals, but they had one thing in common -- they loved Jesus Christ.

I have mixed feelings whenever as a Pastor I receive new members into a congregation just as we witnessed this morning -- mixed feelings because I ask myself, How have they come? And how will they be received? What is it that prompts a man to want to join the Church? What is it that prompts a member (?) to want to become a member of St. Luke congregation? And once that decision has been made, what will he find in the hearts and souls of the people who are already members of St. Luke Church? Can there be this one triumphant (?) motive that these who come to us should find in the hearts of all? to the life of Jesus Christ, and all that we do in Saint Luke Church we do out of a love for Jesus Christ and what he has done for us? I hope a member does not come to Saint Luke Church because it is an attractive Church. I hope a member does not come to Saint Luke simply because it is a growing Church -- and I want it always to be a growing Church, and so do you. I hope that a member will want to come to Saint Luke Church because he can find in Saint Luke a people who love the Lord Jesus Christ and who know what Jesus Christ has done for each one of them. And if any single member received this morning should find anything less than Jesus Christ in your soul and in mine -- I shall not finish that sentence. There is a great power obtained by those people in the day of Pentecost because they were of one mind. Jesus Christ was in their hearts.

The third thing must be said. When they went to that upper room, everyone was expecting -- they expected something to happen. Jesus Christ had made a promise, and they knew he would keep his, promise, and they thought perhaps this day it would come. Now I must search your soul. When you came to Saint Luke this morning, were you expecting anything to happen? Did you come expectantly, saying to yourself, Ah, this morning when I go to church, I will hear the hymns of God sung in praise and adoration. When I come to church, I will hear the word of God read. I will

expect that the man who goes to the pulpit will have a soul on fire that when he speaks, he will speak to me about the truth of God. Did you come expecting that to happen? Dearly beloved, even as you expect, so shall these things come to pass. Sometimes the only upon the grace of God in your heart is the fact that you do not expect God to do it.

As your Pastor, I will be asking many things from you. I will be asking for your prayers for Saint Luke Church; I will be asking for your prayers for those who serve on the staff; I will be asking for your prayers for all those who come into our membership; but there is something I am going to ask too:

I am going to ask that every Sunday when you come you expect something to happen that when the hour is over, you will not be disappointed; that God's voice will have been heard, his face will have been seen and his presence will have been felt. Then shall you make this place an upper room.

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Sunday, June 10, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

"And they all with one consent began to make excuses." There it is, my friends. It stands out in bold-faced type in the Gospel lesson for today. You cannot ignore it. "And they all with one consent began to make excuses." This is a part of that parable which came as an answer of our blessed Lord to a man who happened to make a chance remark. In the course of ^{the} conversation that was taking place someone meaning very well, said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who is going to break bread in the kingdom of Heaven." This man who made that remark could not think of anything more wonderful than to be able to be God's guest and to be able to accept the invitation of God to come to his table. Jesus, I think, must have looked to the man who made that chance remark and said to him -- let me paraphrase it for you, won't you? -- "That is what you think; but it is not that way. Let me tell you something," and then Jesus spoke the parable which constitutes the Gospel lesson for this, the second Sunday after Trinity.

It was a king, I presume, who decided to spread a very lavish table. He wanted people to come as his banquet guests. Now those of us who have traveled in the Near East have come back with a very marked impression that there are only two strata of society in the Near East, and especially so at the time of our Blessed Lord -- the very, very rich and, for the other extreme, the very, very poor -- no inbetween. And not many people could afford to put on a banquet, and when such a feast was spread it was truly a great occasion. Now, says Jesus, the host sends his messenger with the invitation -- Come, I want you to be my guest. And I think Jesus must have turned to the man who made the chance remark and said, Now you are thinking that everyone is going to accept, aren't you? You are thinking that when the word gets around that a table like that is being spread, that they will settle at the gates (?), they will wait in line to be received. Now listen to me, says Jesus, the man said 'Come' and each in turn who was invited began to make excuses. One man said, I cannot come because I purchased myself a tract of land and I want to go and take a look at it. Another man who was invited says, Thank you very much; I should like to

come, but I have just purchased for myself five yoke of oxen. I must go and prove them and put them to the task. And a third man -- each of those men in turn becomes a type, you see -- and a third man in the parable, having been invited, says, I have taken to myself a wife; I have just gotten married; I cannot come. I pray thee, have me excused. Now it is a lamentable thing that men should decline the invitation of a gracious host, but equally lamentable, and even more so, is the fact that when they ask to be excused they make so flimsy, foolish and ridiculous excuses -- and that is the why of this parable, for Jesus is speaking to these men to illustrate for them the folly of men who refuse the grace of God and the invitation to accept at the hand of the Lord what only God can give.

I have come to this sacred desk primarily this morning to interpret this parable for you, and perhaps, and even more important than what I tell you should be what you tell yourself once this sermon has been preached, but we will get to that point a few paragraphs on.

Let me go back now and tell you that Jesus was telling these men that when the invitations were refused they were giving downright ridiculous answers. "I pray these, have me excused; I have purchased for myself a tract of land and I want to go and look at it." Banquets in the Near East are served during the evening hours, and darkness comes quickly. There is no prolonged period of twilight in the Near East, and the evening hour sets in rather rapidly. No man would go out and look at a tract of land by night. Jesus might have turned to the man and said, "Now ridiculous can people become. 'I pray thee have me excused. I want to go and look at a tract of land by night.'" And equally foolish -- and that is the thing that you must understand in this paragraph -- equally foolish is the answer of the man who said, "I have purchased five yoke of oxen and I want to go and prove them and test them." Can you imagine any man, and particularly a person in the Near East -- and I am not speaking facetiously -- who would buy something before he knew he was getting his money's worth? The time to prove and test something is before you sign on the dotted line. They were not that they would wait until after they had purchased something to discover whether or not it had any worth.

Jesus must have turned to the man who made the chance remark and said, "How foolish; how ridiculous can a man be -- I pray thes have me excused; I have purchased five yoke of oxen and I want to go and put them to the task.

When the man says, I cannot come because I have just gotten married -- of all the man who should have been glad to accept the invitation, it should have been he, because in the Near East there are those who like to make marriage a glorious cause for celebration, and happy indeed is . that man whose kinfolk can spread a grand table for him, have music, dancing and celebrate one night after another. It could have been that that man could not have afforded such a thing, and if that is so, he of all people should have accepted the invitation. Not everyman has a banquet made for him like that.

Jesus, I remind you, is trying to prove that when people refuse an invitation to a grand occasion, that may be lamentable, but the more so that they should offer such flimsy, ridiculous excuses. Now that is the first part of this sermon. I have been endeavoring to interpret for you to whom Jesus spoke this parable, and I have tried to hold up for you the central luminous truth, the golden cord that runs about the parable which Jesus was speaking to someone that this man might understand that to refuse God is one thing, but to throw in his face a flimsy excuse is downright ridiculous and foolish.

The second part of this sermon deals with intimation -- a suggestion or two, if you will. Let me begin by calling to your attention something that you might be prone to overlook. Jesus is deliberately ^{likening} ~~enlightening~~ the thing that he has to offer to a feast, a banquet, a glorious occasion. Again and again Jesus talks about joy and happiness -- that is what he is offering people. If I were asked by anyone to name certain things that have sorely tried me in these years of my ministry, I would have to admit that I have little patience with people who think that whatever God offers is always somber and killjoy; I have little patience with people who think that going to Church is a monotonous, meaningless thing -- no

at all about the hour of worship. Would you believe me if I were to tell you that for me this hour I spend with you in God's house is one of the happiest

hours of my week? To be able to call upon the name of the Lord; to walk with people who claim his love, and seek his pardon, who receive his strength -- this is a joyous experience to know that when I cross the threshold of this place I am not simply coming to the nave of St. Luke Church, but I am coming because my Lord and my Saviour has invited me to come, and that is no little thing when God himself says, "Come; Come."

I would suggest then as you think of this parable that you never forget that whatever God invites you to should always be considered a glorious thing. God never offers anything except that through the experience joy may be eventually vouchsafed to you. Some of us who wear the cloth go to our beds at night terribly distressed when we see even our own people who look elsewhere, who turn their backs on God thinking that they will find somewhere else the joy that only God can rightly give. So much by intimation; so much by suggestion.

And now the last part of this sermon deals with application. There comes to any pastor, I think, who prepares a sermon on this parable the unfortunate temptation to become personal; to march, as it were, right up to the soul of every single member of his flock and to say to each person, "Hold on there. Can you see yourself in the mirror of this truth? What reflection comes to you right now?" And they all with one consent began to make excuses. If any of us becomes guilty of a common sin, it could be this one -- refusing to accept what God is consistently giving. Not that we shout out against it; not that we ourselves against it; but that we simply turn our backs and give our attention to something else. We may not say, Down with God. But we could turn our backs and focus our eye upon something else. I am realistic enough to admit the fact that here in the case of this parable everything that took a man away from the banquet occasion was in itself to a degree a very honorable, a very fine thing. The Bible does not decry the fact that a man should be a steward in his business relationship; that a man should be a good steward and ought not to spend his money foolishly. He ought to give something good in return for his investment -- Business production, marriage, these things are important. But when they become more important than God, that is the danger mark. That is the difficult

time in any man's soul. Now the truth of this parable you and I must apply to ourselves. Most of us are engaged in some type of business or productivity to some sort of degree. Most of us live by what we earn, and most of us have little time for those who become lax and dilatory. We seem to want to take off our hats to those who are ambitious and want to get along. But beloved I say to you with all the earnest quality of my soul -- Never get along at the expense of God. Never further your own ambition and do something and keep God waiting for what God wants to give. Even in such a matter as the development of a home, God himself knows how in this day we want to see everything and anything happen that will hold the home together and make a home , but there are those who run the risk of a great temptation when they even make of their home a kind of God and crowd God -- the true God -- out of the picture and have no time for God. Our Blessed Lord spoke this parable to a group of people because he wanted to illustrate to them that whenever a man shows (?) something less than what God had to offer, the man could appear downright ridiculous. I have too much regard for the to think that I can sit in judgment on each of you. I shall not endeavor to tell you where this sermon applies in your own case. I respect your own integrity. I respect the soundness of your own Christian conviction that this sermon is preached, you can go off in your own quarters somewhere and discover for yourself when on occasion, whatever it might have been, you have thrown excuses into the face of God, and when God wanted to give you something, you have deliberately chosen something of lesser worth.

If I were given to writing things as the author of "Green Pastures" wrote, I think I would write certain lines for Gabriel, and I would even make bold to put certain lines upon the lips of Jesus Christ himself. Could it be that Jesus looks down from Heaven above upon us? Could it be that Jesus Christ is sending his messenger to each of us and says: Here, This is what I want to give you; This is the fellowship into which I want to invite you; This is the cause to which I ask you to give of your time, your type (?) and your talents. This could be for each of you a glorious experience to be with Me. To be with Me is one of the fine things that happen at the ban-

quat table; it isn't only the food, it is the fellowship. And Jesus looks down from Heaven above and he sees men focusing their eyes upon little things, going hither and yon occupying their time on the things that cannot compare with the things of God. And I think I hear Jesus turning to Gabriel and he says, "Gabriel, How ridiculous can they be?"

Beloved, don't ever let Jesus have to think that about you or me. Learn to look for what he has to offer, and when you see his outstretched hand, take it, claim it. There is no one -- no one -- that can ever give any better under any circumstances or condition what only God can give.

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Sunday, July 8, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

That was a very disturbing statement made by our Blessed Lord. It is reported in the 24th Verse of, the 16th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." It seemed like one sure way of how not to win friends and influence people -- to tell them at the very beginning when you are interested in being truthful that there is a cross you are expected to carry. Some people blindly enough come to religion thinking it is a way to escape the burdens of the world. Here is the carpenter's son who is saying, You come and follow me and I will see that you have some burdens to carry.

This text kept bobbing back and forth before my mind

Fennell
Jim Fennel (?)

who was the local agent for Transworld Air Lines. Jim was boasting to some of us that he had made a ten-day air trip to Beirut, London, Rome and Cairo and back. He took everything he needed for those ten days in his brief case -- one complete change was all that he needed in this "Wash and Wear" age of ours. Boastingly he said, "One can travel lightly." Now what Jim has said is parabolic, and I keep thinking about it when I remember this text. On the one hand, "If any man will come after Me and follow Me, let him take up his cross", and on the other hand, "One likes to travel lightly". Over against this I am also thinking of that character in the British novel. He was a man who had served his stint in the British foreign service. These words were his as I remember them from the novel: I always make it my business when I get to a certain post never to become involved. In this life of mine, it is here today and perhaps recalled tomorrow, and I never want to have myself in that delicate position of having a terrific emotional strain of trying to dig up my roots, severing ties and going someplace else. I ask two questions of people -- I deliberately do not become involved in their lives, and then interestingly enough he had the same phrase, I make it my business to travel lightly. That, too, I say is parabolic because there are people in our day who make it their business to skim the surface of life, never permitting themselves to become involved less the price be too great. And yet I submit to you this

morning that all of life is a matter of involvement. A chap falls in love, only to become involved. A home is established, one mate to another; one involvement after another -- the maintenance of a home, trying to assume the role of the father and the husband at the same time, and the breadwinner at that; trying to be an example; one involvement after another. No matter how you may look at life, you cannot escape becoming involved.

Jesus says to those who would come after Him You can't escape it; you have to go through with it, and you might as well assume the burdens from the very beginning. Did it ever occur to you, beloved, that when Jesus Christ came from Heaven above it was a whole matter of involvement. He no sooner got on earth than He became tied up in people's lives. He was never the consistent hermit. Oh, there were periods of time when he went away all by Himself, that necessary moment of renewal, but even on the great Mount of Transfiguration, the glory is left behind and he goes down into the valley and immediately he becomes involved with the people's needs. He left Heaven above to come here on earth and get involved with all kinds of people. You knew the record -- not a very attractive one at that. Murderers, thieves even, choosing for his company a man who turned out to be a betrayer. One of the women who missed him most was a woman he had gathered up from the gutters. He never traveled lightly, always getting involved with people and taking on their burdens, and their burdens made for Him the cross he had to take to Calvary. But what is Calvary's cross but an accumulation of the burdens of the sins of the world?

Jesus said, If any man will come after me, there is a burden to be
and a long lonely road to be taken, and at the head of the road,
always at the end, there is the brow of Calvary. There are, you know, as many crosses as there are people. I am not talking about one great cross, which is the cross on Calvary's brow, but I am thinking of the crosses you and I have to carry each in his own way -- Involvement -- the burdens of the world.

I have a fraternity brother who, on occasion, would take me back to the

campus. And I remember once he said to me, Now when we get back there are going to be quite a number of items of business on the agenda, but let me give you a bit of advice -- I am a bit elder than you -- don't show too much enthusiasm; don't get too excited and raise too many questions, because if you show yourself interested, they might make you chairman of the committee. Keep yourself from getting involved.

In the fifteen years that God has given me to shepherd the people you meet all kinds of souls. Some can be very, very kind and very, very honest. "Pastor, I would like to join the church that you shepherd, but do you mind if I tell you something before I join? I will attend services, but do not expect me to be very active. I don't want to become involved. Don't ask me to usher; don't ask me to sing; don't ask me to teach; don't ask me to become a member of a committee; don't ask me anything. Just let me come and sit."

This whole matter of the Kingdom of God is a matter of involvement. And I am not blind to the fact that perhaps the greatest single contribution that some people may be able to make to the kingdom is marking the path to God's house and occupying the pew -- and God himself knows that that number could increase. We know many people who might be able to make a contribution of that nature. But the Kingdom of God is more than sitting in a seat in the Church. There are souls to be touched; people to be won for the kingdom where they are. Not especially where we would like to be or have them come to us. Jesus said, If a man will come after me, let him follow me, and I doubt if he spent more than ten percent of his time in the walls of a church. He was always going to people where they were; always finding them in their predicaments, getting involved, taking on their work -- trudging away to a lonely hill with all the burdens of mankind thrust upon his shoulders.

It is a pastor's great privilege to have people come to him. I told you that before. When I have the good fortune to talk to young men who want to contemplate the gospel ministry, I sometimes tell them this: it will be a long . . . By the very nature of your calling, you can spend much time in prayer and meditation with God, and on the other hand, by the very nature of your calling, you can usually have an

open sesame, an open door into people's lives. When that happens, sometimes they bare their souls and they will tell you the cross that they have to bear. And there it is, and you know what they are thinking: Pastor, can't you somehow assure me that tomorrow will be taken away? The Pastor remains silent at that point. And I have never told any of you that, have I? But there is one thing that I can say -- To be a Christian may involve carrying that cross and taking that burden, but that isn't all that is involved. Ah, but I can't finish the sermon at that point. What else has to be said I will tell you in a minute or two when the sermon draws to a close. Let us get back to the other side of the point of the text.

"If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." One does travel lightly if he has faith, however. These burdens have a way of being lifted, albeit they are upon our shoulders and that is the difference between the man of faith and the man who is not a man who has faith in God. When a man has faith in God the burden may remain but he knows that he is being sustained. Some of the saints that I know are people who have become saints because the burdens they have been carrying they are being sustained by the strength of God.

There was a noble soul who had a very monotonous day's work but when the day's work was done she almost flew from her office door because she was glad that after the day's work she was free? Not all all. She went home to a burden very grievous to bear. She had the constant care of an invalid sister, and while others were free to turn their backs on the desk and have a night perhaps of frivolity and pleasure, this soul went back day after day, night after night, to the constant grievous burden of caring for an invalid sister. But who was she who was the one in the office with the white in her eyes? It was the brave soul with the constant burden because this was her beloved. "I shall not evade it. I shall carry the burden of my invalid sister so long as God gives me strength. She was strengthened. She was sustained. And the burden was still there. This is what happens to a man of faith. The cross may not be taken away and the burden may remain, but you know, as he travels that road, if he is a man of faith eventually he becomes aware of the fact that he is

not walking alone. He feels the presence of someone drawing near to him. And the conversation takes place. "You are going my way, my friend. I have been this way before. I knew all about the journey. I knew how long it will be, and how rough, and how lonely. Let me walk by your side. Here, let me put your shoulder to . . ."

It is the word of Jesus Christ, the great burden bearer of the world. He who takes his burden and carries it and stays in the road, has the great joy and the fellowship of meeting the great burden bearer, Jesus Christ.

That sometimes is the point at which our little conference will close when I meet our parishoners and he or she will introduce me to the cross. I cannot say, "Go, it will be gone to-morrow." But by the grace of God it becomes my noble privilege to say, "Go, and I pray that somewhere along the line you will find yourself in the company of Jesus Christ. And he will tell you that he travelled . . . and he will stay with you until you reach the end. That is one of the great blessings of the Christian faith -- not to escape the carrying of a burden, but in the carrying of the burden to know that the one who slips his hand into yours is Jesus Christ himself.

I do not blame you for thinking it, beloved. If only we did not have to become involved. If only we could so regulate our lives that there would be no burdens to carry, and what is more, we did not have to carry the burdens of other people. I try to put myself into some of the lonely saints of the world. I say to myself, How would I have felt if I had been Simon, . . . He went to Jerusalem, you see, for all the festivities. He wanted to be on the sidelines. He wanted to observe people, wanted to see what went on. . . . But, lo and behold, his curiosity got the best of him, perhaps, and he looks to see what this thing is that is taking place,

and as soon as draws near, not wishing to become involved, a . . . soldier takes him and throws him into the midst of it and says, Here you, you help this man carry his cross. Maybe that is the way it is with some of us. We would much rather watch from a distance; we would much rather be on the sidelines. A spectator, not a participant. But the hand of fate touches us and throws us into the thick of it and says, Here, you, help carry this man's burdens. If that should ever happen to you

don't . The burden that you may have to carry may be part of the burden that God himself is carrying. To be up there with Jesus Christ. Honestly now, honestly now, I cannot think of anything greater than that.

If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. Jesus said it. But let me tell you something else. That isn't the only thing that He said. Let Jesus Christ finish his sentence. Jesus Christ also said -- and I put it alongside of this even though the space of time may be great -- Jesus Christ said, If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. But he also said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end. You may remember the one; do not forget the other. The two go together.

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Sunday, September 2, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The text is a portion of the 55th verse of the 13th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

It was not so much what they said; it was the tone of their voices; it was the cynicism that could be easily caught. It was the apparent scorn and the most certain ridicule. "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

You see, He had been teaching in their midst. The words that he had spoken were words of truth. They were the very words of God. In their narrow minds they could not quite understand how a man who dealt with the carpenter's tools could have such words of wisdom fall from his lips. "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

It has taken the Church a long, long time to get over the same error that was made by these men. It has taken the world a longer time than that to get over the fact that just because a man might work at a menial task that he cannot commune with God. Is not this the carpenter's son? What? Can't a carpenter be honest? Can't a carpenter be capable? Can't a carpenter think? Can't a carpenter pray -- that is, talk with God, and what is more, be able to hear God talk with him? In their narrow minds they did not figure it that way. They thought that only men who wore garments could talk about the things of God. They were enough to think that only men who had been set aside for Holy tasks could do things that would be pleasing in God's sight and upon whom God would smile with a special benediction.

On this Labor Day Sunday I come to you to remind you what the Church is trying to remind her people and the world -- that any man, anywhere, who goes to his day's work with clean hands and who feels at the end of the day that what he has done has been done for the betterment of mankind, the Church says that man in his work is as sacred as the priest who stands with white garments before the Holy Altar.

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" I remember reading sometime ago that familiar passage in the Bible and being strangely struck by the epistle pronouncement of God's favor upon Jesus. The heavens had parted, the voice of the Almighty was being heard: This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And then it occurred to me

that up to that very time Jesus had not preached a single sermon; up to that very time Jesus had not performed a single miracle; up to that very hour Jesus had not established a firm group of -- and yet the voice of the Almighty is being heard: This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, and up until this very hour he had spent practically all of his time working in a carpenter shop. And the seal of God's approval is pronounced upon a man whose hands had lifted the hammer, the anvil and the saw. Then it occurred to me also that once when Jesus as a lad was confronted by his parents, he replied so magnificently, Why don't you know? I must be about my father's business. And what did he do after he had spoken those words? He went straight back to Nazareth and spent year after year at the carpenter's bench. This man, the carpenter's son who said he wanted to be about his father's business.

this
Is not/the carpenter's son? And the answer -- despite their scorn, despite their ridicule, their cynicism -- the answer is absolutely Yes, this is the carpenter's son. For when God saw fit to give his beloved to the world, he cast him into the role of a workman. God's great Galilean, the carpenter's son. But arise on this day to ask the question.

Honestly now, why did he spend so many years in the carpenter's shop. So many people to be touched by the proclamation of the gospel of God; so many miracles to be performed; so many people to be saved. How do you account for it? Three years as the idol (?); perhaps, perhaps twenty years in a carpenter's shop. What was he doing all that time, asks the poet, from boyhood time to ? What he the more or the less about his Father's business? Why so long in the carpenter's shop?

Answer No. 1 -- I think he was there because there were mouths to be fed. Mary had to have a roof over her head. There were brothers and sisters who were dependent upon Joseph and the one to whom he had taught the carpenter's trade. The Christian Church has a right to tell the man who works that it is no shameful thing to work for the pay check. The Christian Church has a right to proclaim that it is an honorable thing to work. That, in the end, as a result there are those to be clothed, there are those who will be sustained. It has been said that Joseph died not long after Jesus

passed adolescence and before he became a young man. If that were so, it is absolutely necessary that the one to whom he had taught the carpenter's trade should remain^{there} and assume definite and specific responsibility.

In the early years of my ministry and even before I finished theological seminary, like all impressionable chaps, I went around using that illustration that has become so threadbare about the man who saw men working in the quarry, and he said, "What are you doing?" (You have hard it so often yourself.) The first man said, "Why, can't you see? I'm shaping stones." The second man said, "I am earning my wages." and the third man said, "I am building a cathedral." In my impatience, in my lack of wisdom, my weight completely at the expense of the first two men, of the last man, as though the only work acceptable in God's sight was the work of the philosopher, the idealist, the dreamer, the builder of the cathedral. But I can understand now the reply of ^{Emil Brunner}, that great theologian, who replied when they asked, he said, "I would not discount the man who does his day's work, earns his wages, that his family should be cared for."

This carpenter's son, this Jesus, this one for whom the heavens had been parted, and the voice of the Almighty had been heard saying, I am well pleased in him. The carpenter's son -- the days' work should be done, the wages should be earned so that Mary should have a roof over her head, that his brothers and sisters should be fed and clothed. Happy indeed is that workman who goes to his day's assignment, no matter how it may be, inspired by the fact that what he brings home, he brings home for those whom he loves and for those who are dependent upon him. It is, my friend, an honorable thing to be concerned with one's mind because of the needs of others. What was he doing all this time? Why, was he at the carpenter's bench?

The second reason, it seems to me, is as long as he was there he felt that what he was doing, he was doing because there was a need for the product of his hands. What he was doing, he was doing because these things were useful to other people. There was a great need in Nazareth for the plow, for the yoke. Many a man who came to the carpenter's shop was there because he needed . Jesus

could stay at that carpenter's bench so long as he felt that what he was doing was absolutely necessary for the lives of other people. That, too was part of the Christian philosophy (?) of labor. I have a right, and what is more, I must needs go to my daily task as long as there are people who need what I can do. God did not ordain that all men should be preachers. God did not ordain that all men should be teachers. It is a startling thing to realize that men who were called into the kingdom were always the workman.

I had at one time what I thought was ^a/rather impressionable service in another church. The time had come when the church had to be done over. It was restored with a fresh touch of beauty. Workmen had been busily engaged for a number of months. Do you know what the first service was that we held in that remodeled church with that renovated beauty? The very first service we had was a service attended by the men who had worked with their hands -- the painter, the plumber, the electrician, the carpenter. We asked them to come and ⁱⁿthe sermon that I had the good fortune to prepare that day, I made bold to say that if the Lord Jesus Christ himself should enter the door of that church and the usher would say to him, "And where, sir, would you like to be seated?", I had a type of suspicion that he might have replied, "If you don't mind, I would like to sit with the workmen, the men who work with their hands, the men who with their minds fashioned this structural beauty, who dedicated their capabilities, who poured back into the human scene something of their spirit". And I think that if the Lord Jesus Christ were to walk ^{our} ~~their~~ way again, he would be most at home with those who gave an honest day's work time after time.

It is a difficult thing though -- I am not unmindful of it -- in our day one can't always feel that what he is doing is useful. He may be far removed from the finished product. He can't always see that what he is doing is being helpful to somebody else. Happy indeed is that man who when his day's work is done can always see some home, some situation that is better and brighter because of the work of his hands.

Then I think in the last case that our Blessed Lord stayed so long in the

carpenter's shop because it was his great opportunity to prove to the men who he had called that their day's work could be honored, dignified and glorified by God. Day after day he went to that carpenter's bench. Some days might have been pleasant, some customers could have been dishonest, some of the things perhaps were never paid for; always he ran the risk of being taken advantage of by someone -- but he went back to the day's work time and again because he could feel in his heart and in his soul that God was going to smile upon him because his work was done honorably and well, and that by his example, his followers could have the pattern by which the bulk of humanity who by the sweat of their brows earned their livelihood, could have a pattern.

If Jesus ~~built~~ ^{train} a ship, she would travel ~~to remain~~
If Jesus ~~erected a barn~~ ^{no heads would be kept by him}

When the time came for him to enlist followers, he enlisted workmen. He could always talk their language. He could send them back to their assignments, not giving them a church, but perhaps they had to go back to where they lived and where they worked, but when they went back, they had an example. The example not only of the preacher on the mountain, the example not only of the man on bended knee, but also the example of the carpenter's son.

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Sunday, September 9, 1956 -- "Today and Tomorrow" --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

One of the greatest hymns in all Christendom. Don't forget easily what you have just sung. If you cannot remember the entire hymn, then ask God to indelibly mark upon the fabric of your heart the last two lines of the last stanza. "God never hath forsook the need The Soul that trusteth Him indeed. For there in a far more eloquent fashion than anything I can say to you now is the truth that you should remember from this day. The hymn was deliberately chosen as a prelude to the sermon about to be preached. The sermon is entitled, "Today and Tomorrow". The text is from the Gospel lesson for the day, the 34th Verse of the 6th Chapter of St. Matthew. "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto today is the evil thereof."

Here, my friend, is a sermon for everyone of us. For show me the man in this place who can honestly say that he has never worried, that he has never found himself as a burden grievous to bear. but in my book at least no man's work is who has at some time or another has found himself in a position of saying that life's burden is too great. God has a way of sending each of us at one .time or another into the testing group simply to discover how much we can carry, if for no other reason than to show to ourselves that no man can go it by himself. That is why we worry. The burdens of life are too grievous to bear. But here you have the word of Jesus Christ saying to us, Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take .thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

We dare not make the mistake of reading too much into these words. It isn't correct for anyone of us to say that just because Jesus so spoke that none of us should not have some forethought; that none of us should get to the place where he shall no longer be concerned. There is a difference -- there is a border line -- that can be drawn between concern and worry. And there is a kind of worrying, that we do that is downright sinful. In the sixteen years that God has privileged me to

spend in the ministry I have felt on certain occasions that the thing I had to speak to somebody was not so much a gentle pat on the back and say, Now, now, my friend, you just go out and smile and everything will turn out all right. One of the damnable failings is held by some people and proclaimed by others that one can just go his way merrily through life, never thinking deeply, never becoming over-anxious, but just drifting along merrily, and everything eventually will turn out all right. My friend, I can tell you that eventually everything will turn out all right, but it will not necessarily turn out all right just because you go along through life drifting merrily, thinking it is going to turn out all right.

There have been times when in the province of God some soul has come to me with a hunger and a thirst for a peace, but unfortunately the soul has had no desire of the things that make for that peace, and perhaps the word that I would have to speak to that person would be this: You ask God to give you a couple of sleepless nights; you ask God to give you the courage to stare your sins in the face and to call your wrong-doing by name; you ask God to let your soul be tortured, but then after a while you will find yourself, you will find yourself, made ready for the peace that only God can bestow on the man who in an hour of anguish throws himself completely at the mercy of God to receive the peace that God gives to a soul that has been made ready for the cleansing.

No, we are not to understand that just because we may treasure this text this morning that we can go through life without thinking deeply and without thinking seriously. And maybe occasionally we may have to worry, but the thing we must remember is this: I must never worry at the expense of shortchanging ourselves by a deep and abiding faith in God. We must never so worry that we throw out of the window and completely ignore the necessity for leaning securely upon the hand of God.

In these eight months that I have spent with you, I have not hesitated to lay bare my soul in this sacred place on occasion. I do not hesitate to tell you that I, too, have my great moments of concern when the burdens of this parish

rest heavily upon my shoulders. It is not an easy thing to shepherd a people. It is not an easy thing to be their spiritual advisor. A pastor has an open door -- an open door into one heart and one soul after another, and he realizes there are certain moments and certain times when the word that that soul needs most to hear may have to come through him. And that is a great responsibility, and no man can take it easily.

Sunday after Sunday, and when I come here and stand at this desk, realizing the path that some of you have taken to this very place this morning, knowing the positions of great responsibility that some of you hold, knowing the very narrow and thin thread by which some of you are holding on to life, it is not an easy thing for me to stand here. And my soul is sorely tried and greatly troubled -- and do you think that before you I come to this pulpit I fall casually on my knees at that prayer desk? Before I come to this desk, I am driven to my knees lest I fail my God in speaking the word that he wants you to hear. And if I should fail him, then I most certainly should fail you.

Yes, beloved, all this is simply to say that there is a place in every man's soul for concern; there is a place in every man's soul for anxiety over the right things and in the right way. This does not give any man blanket coverage to say, We need not worry. But if we are to understand this text aright, it means we are never to worry at the expense of our trust and our faith in God -- and that is something terribly important. There are some people who worry needlessly. They worry about the past. There are some people who are necessarily worried about other people's past -- they themselves would not have done with somebody else's past. There are some people who worry about today needlessly the trials and the tribulations that press at this very moment. There are some people who worry about tomorrow. "I know what happened to my grandmother", they say, "Before she died." Or they say, "I know what happened to my partner in business." "I remember what happened during the last recession." They know the things that could happen; they

know the things that might happen. But all the same, they haven't happened yet, and in the meantime, they worry needlessly. And at the expense of a deep and abiding faith in the hand of the Almighty God.

To those who are prone to worry that way, to those who are prone to worry at the expense of a deep and abiding faith and trust in God, Jesus speaks the necessary words. If you will find it, my friend, if you will read sentence after sentence in this Gospel lesson for today -- quietly and calmly Jesus said to a people who are so easily beset: Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Don't take thought for raiment; don't take thought for food. Then he laid down the first suggestion: To those who are prone to worry at the expense of a faith in God, he says, Think. Ah, but you say, and I hear you say it quickly, That is my trouble. I can't quit thinking about my problem. I am always thinking about my burden. Wherever I go I keep on thinking, thinking, thinking. I go on a trip, I take my problem with me. I devise some way, some scheme of changing my house, but after a while I find myself, thinking about the same thing. I take my thought with me. It is always there.

Think. That is right, says Jesus, but think properly. That is the important thing. Think healthfully. Get the thinking in the right perspective. When you think, do a thorough job of it. Stay (?) against your misfortune and your misery what God has already bestowed upon you. And also recognize the fact when you are thinking that there are some things that you cannot escape; that there are some things

believe could not happen to you.

God has not placed us in a world where we are immune from every burden. It is a noble thing to think that way. It is a noble thing to think that there are/ ^{some things} that you cannot change. But by the grace of God, you may be able to keep them from changing you. That is highly significant. We may have no control of all things that are round about us, but we may be able to control what those things do to us when they appear. Think, says Jesus Christ, you cannot add one cubit to your stature. Think about that for awhile; There are some things you cannot change.

And that is not a shameful thing to admit or to accept. But by the grace of God you can keep it from changing you. And the saints are the people who have gone through life keeping the circumstances from changing them.

The second thing that Jesus Christ suggests is this: Let the fact that there are burdens to be borne and things grievous to carry, but in the fact of all that keep for yourselves a dominating motive, a dominating purpose, a motivating factor in life. That is exactly what he is saying when he says, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. If you go through life, keeping your eye on the purpose and the plan of God -- but that is where you and I bog down. We focus our eyes too easily, too readily on the thing as we want it, upon the thing as we think it should happen. "If only I had such and such a thing." "If only I were in such and such a place." That is the way I figure it out. I use my own . I shall be motivated by my own purpose. But said Jesus Christ, Focus your eye upon the plan of God. See the thing that he wants, and then all these other things will fall in rightful pattern. That is the misery of man. He wants to solve his problems his way, and God never meant him to do it that way.

And then Jesus Christ suggests to those of us who are prone to worry too much, Look at the birds of the air. Look at the grass of the field. God ~~will~~ takes care of these things. Remember that the hand of God is good. We have never wanted for any good thing at the hand of God. That is a healthy thing to remember. Life may strike a cruel blow against you, but the hand of God is always good. Learn to remember that, my friend, when you are prone to worry overmuch.

The last thing that has to be said, Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. He is saying, Take one day at a time. One day. Get through today. It is an excellent philosophy that our friends, the Alcoholics Anonymous, have. Never take that first drink. After you have broken the habit, always say "NO" to that first temptation. One thing at a time. It is a marvelous thing in the plan of God, that he should break the years and decades up into day. One day at a time. One day

at a time. I know not what the future may have in store for any of us. I only know we have today.

Pascal, the great philosopher, has said, That is the trouble with mankind. They are only worrying about the past, or they are worrying about tomorrow, and that is why they fail to appreciate today, and because they fail to appreciate today, they never live at all. Jesus says, Take one day at a time. One day at a time.

Beloved, I know not what the future may have in hand, but I do know this: I know the one in whose hands the future is held, and that is enough to support any man any hour. It is the decided advantage that the Christian has, for his God is a God of love, and you can trust him. What tomorrow may bring for you I do not know, but I can tell you one thing: As the hour may come, if you trust Him, you will be strong. This is most certainly true, and this I most certainly believe. Else I would not ask God for tomorrow.

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Tell me now, what did you think when you read the text before you came to church? If you are in a home where the "Messenger" comes to you before a Sunday, you have the distinct advantage because the text is announced in advance, and that is one reason why we have a weekly bulletin mailed into the homes of the parish. Not simply to give you information concerning the life and work of Saint Luke Congregation, but also perchance to help you get into the mood and frame of mind for worship, once you have crossed the threshold of this Holy place. And what did you think if perchance you read that text before you came -- a part of the Epistle lesson for today -- the 16th Verse of the 3rd Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: That according to the riches of his glory you may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

Whatever else you might have thought, did it occur to you that you were catching the echo of the voice of a saint upon his knees? It is a tremendous thing to be ushered into the heart, the soul and the mind of a saint, to hear what he talks about when he talks with God. And what is more, to hear what he talks about when he talks with God about you. That is an impression that the Church at Ephesus should have gotten, because when they read this letter sent to them, they were hearing the voice of their master saint, if one may use that term, upon his knees talking to God and in their behalf. And if the Church at Ephesus got that impression, if their Christian faith might be about the level of your Christian faith and mine, they might have rebelled a bit and reviled the writer. What does he mean, praying to God and asking God for something in our behalf, and that is the thing for which he asks?

Let me tell you a thing or two about them. If they were typical of the early church, they were having a hard time of it. Persecution, trial and tribulation were rampant. They never knew when their name would come up next. They were living in a cruel and unfriendly world. They had that extremely difficult assignment of trying to be Christian in an unchristian world. They went to their meetings, the gathering of the faithful, and every now and then, they would discover a vacant spot and they knew what had happened. Like as not, he had been tossed to the lions, or he might have been dragged to the stands. He might have been raised up as a torch to brighten the garden of a cruel emperor by night; or he might have been crucified,

as was Jesus Christ; or he might have been thrown into a cell, simply to rot away. This was the type of thing that was happening, and they were in the midst of it. And they might have said when they read this letter: Paul, What do you mean? If you are going to talk to God in our behalf, why don't you talk the way we talk? 'God, if this has to happen, don't let it happen to me. God keep me safe. God, keep me comfortable. God, let me have certain conveniences that I may praise your name easily without too much trouble.' Had they been the average type of person in Ephesus, they might have rebelled against the Apostle Paul who, when he prayed to God in their behalf, talked a language contrary to the type of thing with which they concerned themselves when they prayed, because most of us ask from God secondary blessings -- comfort and convenience, freedom from trial. "What ails you, Apostle Paul, why don't you ask God for these things for us?"

When Paul was praying he said, "Dear God, make them strong, building them up on the inside, make them to have adequate resources." He didn't talk about conveniences; he didn't talk about their culture; he didn't talk about their customs -- he was talking about their souls. And, beloved, that is about the highest kind of prayer that a man can make. Aside from the prayer for pardon, there perhaps is no more ^{or perfect} personal prayer than the prayer for power and strength to do what is right in God's sight for his sake. Because the Apostle Paul had experienced what he had experienced, he knew that this was the thing that they needed most. He had gone through the type of thing they were experiencing. It was a daily diet for him -- being let down over a wall in a basket, being chained, being exiled from a little community, driven away to another coast, being thrown into jail -- all that was his daily program and he knew that these things could not be escaped. He knew very well that Christians had to live in a world where they would run the risk of finding themselves in very uncomfortable positions. And so when Paul prays for them he says, "Dear God, make them strong on the inside."

You can't read anything about this man Paul without being terribly impressed by the fact that for him it was a shameful thing if a Christian would be weak. In

his book a Christian was always to be strong. He writes to Timothy, "Be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ." Of his own life he says, "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith and a good fighter is in .

If you want some good reading this afternoon or tonight before you retire, read that whole letter to the Church at Ephesus, and find again and again how the Apostle Paul is talking about the power and the strength and how God is able to support and to sustain. For the Apostle Paul it was a shameful thing for a Christian to be weak on the inside.

Now before I pass too quickly from this introduction, I should remind you that this prayer for strength in the inner man that Paul was making may be a strange one in some peoples' ears, even yours. In the first place, when some of us pray we don't ask God for strength -- we ask God for comfort. When some of us pray, we don't ask for character -- we ask for convenience. And these two are entirely separate and very diverse. In a man's soul they hang in the balance if he is too prone to ask for a secondary blessing when he ought to ask for something that is primary.

In the second place, when a man reads of this prayer dealing with this inner man, it becomes alien to some people's ears because it is so seldom that they concern themselves with the inner man. It is an amazing thing how we concern ourselves with the outer man; how we worry about the impression that we make on people -- it isn't so much what we intend to say, but what we actually said and how it was interpreted. It isn't so much what we intend to do, but what we did and how they will interpret it. So often we concern ourselves overmuch with the outer man -- what other people see of us. The Apostle Paul was always going around trying to probe in the depths of men's hearts, trying to get around in the inner recesses of their minds, for that is where true character is born. That according to the riches of his glory you may be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.

It is the solemn and sacred responsibility of a pastor -- now get this -- it is his sacred responsibility when his people come to Church to undress their souls, to help them to be exposed to Almighty God as they are and not as other people see them,

or not as they themselves may think them to be. And God sustain and God give courage to that preacher who when on a Sunday morning his congregation files out from the sacred place and one or two of them may say, "Pastor, thank you for disturbing my mind; thank you for vexing my soul; thank you for exposing in my own face my weakness to the Almighty God." Not that he does it simply because he delights in taking his people to task, but a Pastor standing at a sacred desk has a reverent trust from Almighty God to probe into the depths and the hearts and the souls of his people.

That is why I come to this place this morning without any reservation whatsoever to ask you, "How long has it been since you have undressed your soul before the face of God? When you have concerned yourself with what you are down deep inside in the inner man? If it should be that it has been a long time that you have taken stock of what you are inside, I will give you three measuring rods which you may wish to use to know whether or not you are strong, whether or not the inner man has adequate resources -- and before I give you any of them, let me tell you something.

I remember being shocked when not too long after the war I was traveling around in Britain and as I sat in one of their railway coaches a Britisher came up to me and he recognized me as an American tourist, and he said to me, Tell me, what impression are you gathering as you go round about from village to village and city to city? What is the thing that means most to you right now? And with the fondness that I have always had for the British, I paid him what I thought was a very fine token of respect. I said, I can hardly believe that you have been able to do what you have done these months since the blitz. You are tidying up your streets; you have cleared some of these places from the rubble; you are starting to build anew. Your industry, your commerce -- I can hardly understand how you have been able to put your hand to the task again and build anew -- ^{who} you have suffered so much month after month for four long years -- that blitz. You are rebuilding your cities so magnificently. And he said to me with a troubled look -- as much as to say, for shame upon you, (noting my clerical collar); why you should forever be trying to

the pulse beat of people's souls -- he said to me, But hasn't it ever occurred to you that the truly important thing might not be the rebuilding of our cities, might not be the rebuilding of our commerce and our industry; that the truly important thing might be the rebuilding of people's souls? Haven't you asked yourself the question, he said to me, What kind of a person will the new Britisher be? What kind of man will we have in our civilization in this post-war world? And I had to hang my head in shame for he was dealing with something basic.

Why build these cities glorious,
If men who are building
In vain we build the work, unless the
builder also grows,
Unless he himself is strong.

Henry Thoreau says, The world is going to Hell because we constantly have improved means for unimproved ends. "

As far as God is concerned, the fabric of a man's heart and the sinew of his soul -- these are the things of primary importance. Because this is true, because soon or late man falls back on the inner resources of his own soul, I ask you to pick up any one of the three measuring rods by which you can determine for yourself whether or not your inner man is being made strong. Here is one of them, in the form of a question, this measuring rod.

What is the integrity of your faith? Down deep inside, have you an abiding faith in the purposes and plans of God? When the world round about you is falling apart, can you stand unafraid, knowing full well that your God will always have the last word? There was a young man who went to see his professor in philosophy one time on the college campus. He was alarmed by the fact -- he had read a lot along those lines -- "I am afraid, Professor, the world is going to come to an end." And the Professor replied and said, 'Well, if it does, very well, there may be some of us who will be able to get along without it.' There are some folks, unfortunately enough, who could never get along without the world with all of its comforts, with all of its conveniences. But my friend, is your faith in Almighty God so strong, so sure, that come wind or weather, its purposes will prevail?

A man whose name I cannot remember wrote an interesting little book entitled, "The Travel Book of the Philosopher", and it has this telling sentence: "For many people I can discover their faith is a very tender plant that wilts easily." When the storm of life my flail against you, will you be able to withstand it because you have faith that somehow you at God's purposes will remain? If you can, then you may rest assured that you are strong inside.

The second measuring rod which you may care to use in assessing your strength of the inner man is by determining for yourself how often you exercise the discipline of prayer. How much of one's day is spent in praying, for it is only by praying that we become strong in the inner man. I want to tell you something -- it is not an easy thing to really pray. For me, sometimes the most difficult thing of a day is to force myself to take time to pray. I get up in the morning, whether right or wrong, my first love is St. Luke Church. Sometimes the family may suffer, but because my first love is St. Luke Church in this world as my responsibility. I am so eager to get caught in the thick of it -- to write letters that have to be written, to meet with people when programs are being planned, to keep my finger on this pulse beat and that pulse beat, to anticipate something even before it may happen, to be, as Edna one day said, "They may not need me, Yet they might; I'll let myself be kept just in sight." Because there are so many things to be done in the course of a given day, I find it difficult sometimes to tarry long enough at the place of prayer -- to be active, to put my shoulder to the task -- and that is not a good thing, where one becomes active at the expense of the period for praying.

A seasoned minister of the Lord Jesus Christ says that in some congregations there may always be found two types of people -- the one is a person who is not at all active in the Kingdom of God. He does not participate in all of the programs. The second is a type of person who is so active that he has no time to pray, always attending meetings, always planning something, always doing something, the hands so busy that they are seldom closed in prayer and the soul should be hushed. There are three things necessary for any successful venture, for any successful soul -- to think, to work, to pray. And some of us may be willing to think, hard as that may be, and

some of us may be willing to work, but the one classification upon which we may fall short may be our ability, or our lack of it, to take time to pray. But that is the only ground upon which God can really bestow upon us the strength that we really need.

And there again I go back, this whole matter being concerned with the outer man. It is not a very pleasant thing if you should discover that you concern yourself too much before the mirror with how you look on the outside and the way you look on the inside. There are some folks who would be very happy if some of the people they knew would even simply balance the scales, give God just about as much time in the morning as they are willing to spend on themselves before the mirror.

And then to gauge the inner resources of your own heart and the quality of it, how much can you say

Can you always believe

that no matter what happens, the thing is going to come out all right by God's hands and by God's purposes? For the man who is strong on the inside he faces the future unafraid because he always knows that God will be in it and God will right it.

Beloved, I am reasonably certain that you know whether or not your shoe has a hole in the sole. I am reasonably certain that you know whether or not your suit may be classified as being threadbare in sections. I am reasonably certain that you know something about the impression you make upon other people and the outward appearance, But in the name of God I ask you, How reasonably certain are you of the state of your own soul? How long has it been since you have taken stock of the strength of the inner man? Someday, someday you will find yourself in a terrible position when you will learn that the only thing you really have is what is inside.

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Sunday, September 23, 1956 -- "Prisoner's Plea" --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "Prisoner's Plea". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the First Verse of the 4th Chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you." What a chuckle the censor must have gotten when he read that. The jailor must have apparently laughed aloud -- "I always thought", he might have said to himself, "I knew that there was something queer about him, but this is the pay-off. He calls himself the prisoner of the Lord. Well, so far as we are concerned, we who run this prison, the Lord did not have a thing to do with it at all. He is our prisoner. He is to be here for sometime. We have heard about him in other communities and we have waited long enough until we have been able to get something on him here when he came to our province. If he calls himself the prisoner of the Lord, he ought to see our record, to see what we have against him." No, to all intents and purposes, thought the jailor, he is our prisoner; we brought the charges. We know what he is like.

But not so the prisoner, Paul. In that jail he had hours to reflect, perfectly and completely mindful of what had happened to him, and being given the privilege to communicate with his friends on the outside, he writes one letter after another. And in this letter he refers to himself as the prisoner. Yes, That is right. But you Christians, get it straight. I want you to think of me as I think of myself. I am the Lord's prisoner. Then after he established that, he goes on to make known his plea -- an entirely different kind of plea. And there is nothing unusual about that, because Christians are sometimes found to be a very, very unusual people, and understandably (?) so. Most prisoners' pleas are directed to a Court, to a jury, to a judge. And usually the man who is making the plea speaks in his own behalf: Let me off a little easy; don't make the sentence so long; are you sure that you have done right by me? Or the prisoner may take advantage of the opportunity, once he begins speaking, to speak to others in the Court room, or to those round about him, anyone who might hear, and he might have a bit of advice to them: Don't be the

fool that I was; don't ever allow yourself to get caught. They are going to sentence me to imprisonment, but don't let it happen to you. You play it smart; you be wise. Or this prisoner in his plea, think of all the things he might have talked about as he writes this letter to his friends on the outside. He might have complained about all of the uncomfortable things -- the cell was rodent ridden, insects, everything; the food was terrible; the world's best chefs are not found in prison kitchens. Whatever food he did get was rather -- he could have complained about that. Sympathetic (?) soul that he was, he could have cried on their shoulders about the filthy language he had to hear. Prison talk are not always these things that one hears within these walls, not always polite, not always delicate, but as a contrary scene he who could write that magnificent hymn of love, -- faith, hope, charity; these three, but the greatest of these is charity -- he who wrote this ode to love had to listen to all that was ugly and cheap. He could have complained about all that, but he writes a letter to his friends and he says, Sure, I am enslaved here. I am a prisoner, but I call myself, The Prisoner of the Lord. You are not forgetting, are you, my friend, that this man behind these prison bars is a man who one day met his saviour face to face, and the outcome of that meeting was an unconditional commitment of his life to Jesus Christ. When the Apostle Paul said to Jesus Christ that he would follow him, he did not say, But there are certain strings attached. I will follow you as long as you guarantee me safe custody. He did not say, I will be your servant as long as the situation remains ideal and the people are free. The Apostle Paul made no such commitment as that, but the commitment that he made was, I will follow you. Period. He knew what it was to go to the village, to be sought constantly by the secret service of that day. He knew what it was to be followed on every of a unfriendly covering a meeting here, a meeting there, and always running the risk of having it broken up by the authorities. One day he had promised the Lord Jesus Christ that he would follow Him, period. He might be driven from one community and go to another community and have the same thing happen all over again. That was no deterrent to him. He was enslaved to Jesus Christ. This

man who writes from prison, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you", was the same man who could write, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, there-with to be content"; the same man who could write and believe, "I know that all things work together for good to them who love the Lord."

Let the jailor mark it up on his records, "Nero's prisoner, the prisoner of Rome." Paul had written up already in his heart, "I am here for the Lord's sake", because he believed that. He made his prison wall a pulpit, and he made his stone wall, as someone has said, a printing press, to use the opportunity for Jesus Christ.

I want to talk to you this morning, my friends, on what made him that way. How could he behave like that, so contrary, you see, as I had already intimated in this sermon, to the type of behavior that might characterize you and me and men and women/^{who} would be made of lesser ? How could he behave that way? How could he go merrily on his way and call himself a prisoner, using the ugly word, and even say, I am a prisoner of the Lord? Well, I would submit to you, my friends, that he was able to do it because he never took his eye off of the proper focus. Come wind or weather, regardless of the conditions or circumstances surrounding him, he always remembered Jesus Christ who had redeemed him, a lost and sinful creature. Ah, yes, on the other hand there are some remembered everything and anyone else except Jesus Christ. There was everything about the prisoner's sermon that reminded him that he was a prisoner. There was everything about the jail that would cause the prisoner to remember that he was still in chains, but the Apostle Paul would focus his eye upon Jesus Christ. And that, my friends, is what the individual Christian ought always to do, no matter where he is and regardless of the situation or the circumstances. Christians are meant to keep their eye on Jesus Christ. You cannot say that you follow someone if you do not watch the leader. And once you take your eye off of the leader, you cease to become a follower. There are certain books that some of us have been reading that make this thing so terribly contemporary. Books that have been written by Martin Niemöller, Henry , Hans Lilje , more of their kind, who in our day for conscience sake and for the cause of Jesus Christ had been in prison, and in some of their writings we read how they were caged into a cell,

four by four, six by six or eight by eight, and that in itself was a luxury chamber because the prisoner would have to share that kind of a cell with perhaps four, five or six other people; and always on the floor the blood stains, a grim reminder of the struggle that had taken place in that very chamber of horror before, the clamorous calls of those who were being persecuted at the other end of the hall. The halls were so arranged that the sound, as in a cavern, could be carried into each cell -- always the agonizing cry -- and brilliantly glowing in each cell the light. How could the man sleep with a bright light in his face, morning, noon and night -- nothing to remind himself of what day it was. Everything that they do to break his mind, his spirit, and get his mind off of Jesus Christ. In his unwilling , he tells us how he kept faith the opportunity to read the scriptures morning, noon and night, and then to share it with somebody else; that even with the reading of the scriptures the mark could be made indelibly on his heart that he could never take his mind off Jesus Christ. That is why Paul -- that is why these men who followed in his train -- could keep themselves in the love of God and at the grace of Jesus Christ, and call themselves prisoners for the Lord's sake. Round about on every side they would be lifted up whereby they would be almost forced to forget. He could talk the way he talked, he could keep his faith because he did not take his eye or his off of Jesus Christ.

If you want a definition for a Christian, tuck this away in the inner resources of your mind: A Christian is one who once having been saved by Jesus Christ never forgets it, and a Christian is one who having found once on the face of God the lines of love, will not take his eye away from that face.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord." A prisoner's plea. My friend, I do not know what may lie ahead for you. I am reasonably certain, however, that the chances are very, very great that you will not rot away in prison. But there are different kinds of prisons than stone walls, heavy gates and barred windows. You and I, if we are not on guard, can become imprisoned by doubt, despair, disillusionment. You and I, if we are not on guard, can become imprisoned by our fears, our frustrations, our failures. You and I, if we are not on guard, can become depressed by our

suffering, by our sorrows, and always the seemingly terrible of sin. What will you do then when these things may seem to have their hold upon you, and shut you up from the finer things of life? Will you love your Lord the less? Will you pay allegiance to Him, nonetheless? The Apostle Paul proclaimed it again and again. If imprisoned you should, whatever the nature of that prison, remember the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not take your eye off him.

I have forgotten the name of the author. He wrote about his experiences in the first World War, trudging wearily on the battlefields of France, finding himself on occasion half dead, not half alive -- and there was a difference for him. How could he go on? Was it worth it? He, whose soul was instinctive to all that was good and honest and decent and right. But he says as he trudged wearily along on the battlefield -- we march, we march, we march -- there would be lighted up by night from the bursting of the shells the figure of the wayside . Then, he says, somehow the pack would rest easier on his back and there would be a kind of spring that would come into his feet, and once more he got up a measure of courage, remembering that Jesus Christ did not escape the burdens that the world could cast unto a man's heart. And he gained encouragement from the fact that Jesus Christ, whom he now remembered, was mindful of his condition and of his circumstances. That is how the saints behaved, my friends. They take no credit for it whatsoever. It was the power and the strength that comes to them when they remember Jesus Christ.

Now, as you continue your journey through life, as the shepherd and bishop of your souls I keep reminding myself of my responsibility for you. That is why I use that figure so often in these sermons. As the shepherd and bishop of your souls I know one thing very definitely -- that even when our Blessed Lord was here upon earth, there was a hell that he could not evade. The brow of Calvary was inescapable, but he faced it. Even in the great times of agony he could still say, My God, My God. He never took his eye away from God. The devil is still in the world. He uses every device at his hands to catch you off guard, to have you take your eye away from Jesus Christ. Don't let it happen to you, is the cry of the saints, who having arrived,

who had who faced a struggle. If you are imprisoned by God's be the Lord's prisoner. Well, that is the Apostle Paul for you.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord -- and now I want to tell you something. You are only getting a half-sermon this morning, deliberately so. I have only tribute to the character; I have only outlined for you his situation; I have tried to tell you the note by which his message is going to be sounded; I have told you about a man in jail, what brought him there, and the accent of his personality. The other half of the sermon I would suggest that you write for yourself. Now I will tell you where you will get the material. You will get the material in the concluding verses of this 4th Chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians. You will be helped tremendously if you will memorize the remainder of this 1st verse: I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; With all lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Paul says, This is what I want to tell you. Now when you meditate upon this, you will appreciate it all the more when you will recall the things that he might have said; the things that he could have said, if he was anything less than a saint. This is a tremendous truth. I suggest that you read it; I suggest that you memorize it. And when at some turn of the road that lies ahead, you may suddenly find yourself imprisoned for the moment, you may find encouragement from this text that will help you to keep your eye on Jesus Christ. And if that should/^{ever}happen to you, I won't have one single worry in the world for your soul.

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Sunday, September 30, 1956 -- "The Second Commandment" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The young lawyer thought he was asking a very important question, when the truth of the matter is this: I don't think there was a Sunday School boy in the entire village who could not have answered his question for him. And there stood up a lawyer, tempting him and saying, Master, What is the great commandment in the law? And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. I can agree, I think, he said it as as all that: This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

I cannot tell you why the lawyer was foolish enough -- he was a bright man; I never saw a lawyer who was not a bright man -- aye, he was foolish enough to ask the question for almost everyone would know the answer. In every Jewish home the first thing in the morning, and always at noontime, and never a night would go by, without it, the good Jewish family would get together for Jewish evening prayers, and part of the ceremony would be the prophets from Deuteronomy: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. Every Jewish boy, every Jewish girl, knew the answer to that question. This is the first, this is the great Commandment.

But maybe he asked the question because of the implication that lies with of this nature. At first blush this only requires that a man should worship; at first blush this indicates that if a man falls upon his knees and tells God that he loves him, and he knows that God loves him, that he can get up from his knees and go away, and he has done his religious duty. This is the Christian obligation. And whether you admit it or not, my friends, there is down deep in the heart of everyone of us the desire to have a private path to the heart of God, to have our own quiet moment in which we spend time with him in our own way, to talk with him the way we and to hear him talk to us the way we think we hear him talk to us. Down deep in the heart of every man there may be the desire to be able to worship God like that,

to have a commandment that says: You must worship God. Period.

My friend, you may begin at that point and in that way, but a Christian dare never stop at that point. I have always been grateful for any opportunity that would take me to Versailles. When visiting in France, I want to tak that little side journey not far from Paris. I would be intrigued by the magnificent buildings that make up part of the buildings of Versailles -- the architecture, the color the walls and the ceilings, to say nothing at all, of course, about the formal gardens -- that riot of color with the fountains and the lights by night. One of the things that impressed me very deeply was the fact that in Versailles, as a definite part of the structure there is the chapel which is quite typical of palaces built in the old country. The king and queen always had their own chapel, their own private chaplain, their own services. In some instances the hired help never was allowed to come to the queen's chapel. There is one place where they will take you and they will say, This is where the servants could gather, and this is the peephole , but they were not a part of it. When I last went to Versailles I had a most uncomfortable feeling because I remembered that the king, the queen must have gone there quite frequently to their chapel and fallen upon their knees and worshipped their God, but the God they worshipped was their God and they lost sight of the fact that he was also the God of the peasant. And outside of the very walls of the chapel to which the king was wont to go was the courtyard, once stormed by a infuriated mob of people when the peasants came, half-starved, half-kaned, clamoring for bread. And their cry would fall silently upon the ears of a sovereign. The god to whom he had prayed was his god, and he had forgotten the ethical and moral implication of the path that he tek when he want to pray. Beloved, I would like to warn you, if I may -- after all, I am the shepherd and the bishop of your souls -- and it becomes my sacred task to raise certain warning signals. Maybe you haven't a private chapel in your^{own}/home and maybe you haven't a private chaplain, but you may run the very same risk the sovemign of France ran when he fell on his own knees, in his own way, to his own Lord, if when you come to Saint Luke Church to spend this hour here, you make your prayers, you have your sacred ob-

ligation, and you get up and you go away from these sacred walls completely blind to the need of some brothers on the outside -- Your religion is just as doubted and just as bad as the sovereign who prayed privately to his god and forget that the king's god was also the god of the peasant. This is the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

There is ^(one) another place in France that I have never visited, but I hope someday I will. It is known as little . Not too many years ago there came to a certain village in France a man who made up his mind that wherever God would give him the privilege to preach the gospel, he would preach -- with the conviction and fire of an old testament prophet and a new testament saint -- and he would do his best to inspire his people to live in that day on the basis of the fatherhood of God by in their desire to serve their fellowman. While they would stretch out one hand to God, they would also have to stretch out one hand for a brother. Their religion would be like that. Andre was the preacher, the pastor of the Little ^{Le Chambon} . After he was there for a while, for reasons of ^{ill} health he was forced to retire. I think something perfectly wonderful happened the day the beloved congregation gathered to bid him farewell. One of the spokesmen said words to this effect: There was a time when we people here in this community came to church on a Sunday morning -- we were intrigued by the eloquence of the man who preached. We felt very comfortable. Then when the service was over, we went very quietly and very easily home and thoroughly enjoyed the Sunday dinner. But when Andre ^{Thorne} came, things were different. When Andre preached, he tickled (?) the conscience of every hearer, and when he talked about God, in the same breath he talked about God's son and everyman's brother. Some of us have to confess that we have never again since he came gone home rather complacently to our Sunday dinner and eaten it in an undisturbed fashion. We have been driven to put our Christianity into practice where we lived. Andre stands in good tradition. It becomes the sacred task of every creature to revere (?) the lines of love upon God's faith and to tell a man that God wants him, but it won't discharge his obligation to his soul if he stops at that point and if he does not propel his people, if he does

not motivate his people to do something from his religion once he has come from the sacred altar.

My friends, I tell you, true religion is this: To make God transparent in your relationship with your fellowman. I think that is worth repeating. True religion is this: To make God transparent in your relationship and in your dealings with your fellow man. The only religion that you really have is not the religion that you cherish in this quiet moment here. The only religion that you really have is the religion that takes that hand after it has been closed in prayer and makes it touch another man's need. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy thyself.

There is one translation that says, so I have been told, that like that like unto it (?). It has the same meaning. The second great commandment is really the other side of the first. To love God is to love your fellow neighbor.

Now I want to raise the question which I hope you are raising. How is it possible for a man to love his neighbor as he loves himself? How do you love yourself, my friend? I will be perfectly honest with you. It isn't a very easy thing to fall in love with yourself. At first we should appear that it is, but upon sober reflection, but especially as you catch yourself reflected in the mirror or God's truth, you are not nearly so attractive. No one knows us better than we know ourselves. We know the mean, contemptible streak by which we are marked. We know very well if it was not for the of society, culture, and if not the desire to be respected, what we might do if we thought we could do it. It is good theology to declare that a man is by nature sinful and unclean. Some of us sometimes see ourselves as we really are, but what happens? We go on loving ourselves just the same, don't we? We go on excusing ourselves. We go on being charitable with ourselves. We go on trying to bolster and support ourselves in this way or in that way. And we do it because some of us have discovered that sinful as we may be, God loves us just the same. And that is the only reason why some of us go on treating ourselves half decently at all, because we permit ourselves to remember that God loves us. Now that is the way a man

loves himself. He deals with himself the way a woman waiting for a guest to come into her home. She will take the bouquet of flowers and will so arrange it that it will get the best light of the window that even the beauty of the flowers may be enhanced by a soft light. And that is the way we deal with ourselves. We try to present ourselves that we look decently by a gracious light.

Now isn't that what Jesus means when he says, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. In the same way that you love yourself. Give yourself the benefit of a gracious light. Give yourself the benefit of doubt, hoping that may be someday when it occurs you may not be nearly as contemptible as you have been. And always because you are remembering that God loves you. God loves you. But he loves you for a purpose -- that you might have the knowledge of his love and by the knowledge of that love you will prove yourself lovely to somebody else. That is the way it works. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Maybe I told you this before -- I cannot remember -- but even if I have, without hesitation I tell it to you now. There was a member of the Eastern Church, the Russian Orthodox, in fact, a pious peasant, who made her prayer, and her prayer at first glance was a perfectly wonderful prayer. "Oh, God, reveal thy face to me. Let me see thou as thou art." Because she knew, of course, that if she could behold the face of god, she could not help but love him. This was the prayer. "Oh, God, reveal thy face to me that I may love thee as thou art." All the time she was praying the prayer, oh, there was no image, the stained glass image of the Christ that came to her, (?) no with those soft raiments from the Near East, but all the time she prayed that prayer there was before her face a parade of personalities -- the crippled, the halt, the maimed, the blind, the prostitute and the miserable of humanity. And all the while she was praying, "Show me thy face, of God, show me thy face that I may love thee as thou art" -- and if her ears were keen enough she could have heard him say, I am with thee. Here is my face. I am in each of these, for I have made them in my image. And if you want to love me, you will love me by loving them.

¶ Have done with it, my friends, have done with it. You can't

The highway an open way that you take to God. And especially when you turn your back on the Lord and go away from him.

? ? ? ?

For on the highway that leads to God is the teeming mass, the endless of all measure.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all that heart, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

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Sunday, October 28, 1956
The Festival of the Reformation

THE TRUE PROTESTANT

Wittenberg wasn't the largest town in Germany, but on this October 31st, the crowds had come to the village, for on several years before that, the Elector of Saxony had seen fit that in this church and in this university town that he had come to love, some of the precious relics of the Christian faith would be put on display. In fact, the village church in Wittenberg was called the Church of All Saints and they were particularly anxious to have there deposited as many of the relics of the saints as they could get. It had been decreed that if the faithful would come, they would receive special certification on this day that their sins would be forgiven, that they would be set right in the mind and in the heart of Jesus Christ. So the people came; this kind of thing did not happen every day.

And chances are the Monk of Wittenberg, the very learned professor in its University, had to edge his way until he came to the door of the castle church. There was something on his mind. History records that he pasted or tacked there a sheet of paper, known as the Ninety-Five Theses, ninety-five things that he was willing to debate, among them certain things that he wanted to question among the policies and practices of the Church that he loved. This was a momentous occasion. The subsequent pages of history record it as the changing from one world to another, a new era, the Protestant age is being born.

But there was no newspaper reporter there to inquire of the Monk of Wittenberg, no roving photographer who might make it his business to make this a specific assignment to take a photograph of the Monk, the Prior of Wittenberg, at this particular moment in history. Now, had the photographer been there, you may rest assured that he would have taken great pains to get the whole thing in proper focus. He'd try to get the lines upon the face of the Monk, he'd try to

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get the sure lines that were a part of his hand as he held the hammer or whatever instrument it was that helped him to secure this piece of paper against the door of the castle church. He would try to have gotten something of the look of the man's face. All of this is a matter of focusing, that he might get a true picture.

I have come to this desk this morning on this day which marks the Festival of the Protestant Reformation, charged with the responsibility as it is laid upon my soul to ask you to get a clear and a sharp and a very definite picture of the Protestant, the true Protestant. When Martin Luther went to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, he did not go there just because he was against something. Too long the picture of the Protestant has been given to the world as a man who is against something. This was a positive stride that Martin Luther took as he went to the door of All Saints' Church. It was because he was possessed by something, an all-consuming passion to declare something that he knew to be true, that he could not stay away from that door. He did not go there, my friend, just because he was against the policies and the practices of his Church. He went there because he had found something in Jesus Christ that made him want to proclaim what he had found, and in affirming that, he might have to be against what was being taught, but he was against what was being taught only because he was in favor of something that he called better and finer and nobler and truer. If you want to get the picture of the true Protestant, you must see Protestantism as something that is very, very positive. Perhaps the better caption for Martin Luther would be not so much "I protest" but "I declare," "I affirm," "I hold up before you," and as I ask you to hang to this tenaciously, you may discover that you'll be against certain practices and policies and programs. That's the picture of the true Protestant.

You must understand, my friend, that a lot had happened before this day of October 31, 1517. You have four years of struggle in one man's soul, a good and honest man trying to discover, "How do I become right with God?", a man who had been trying to discover "How can I have"--what is promised to you every Sunday morning in a Lutheran church service when the pastor begins the final part of the service--"the peace of God that passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus?". For several years Martin Luther had been struggling, trying to find peace, trying to discover that the lines upon the face of Jesus Christ were the lines of love and not simply the lines of a God of wrath who would exact penalty and satisfaction, even in silver and gold, from the faithful. For four years something had been happening in the heart and soul of Martin Luther, and when he got to the place where he discovered that Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is his Redeemer, when he got to the place that he discovered that Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is the Ground and Source of all truth, he could not keep from that door of the parish church in Wittenberg. Because he knew these things and because he wanted to affirm them, he said I am against these things.

Now there is a difference, my friend, and a difference that sometimes we don't quite appreciate because if I were to run the risk this morning of asking you to stand up and say what you consider "a Protestant" to mean, I know the kind of answer that I would get generally: a Protestant is someone who isn't a Catholic, a Protestant is one who opposes Roman Catholics, a Protestant is one who is against them. That's an unfortunate thing that for some people that should be the only thing that a Protestant is, and even our friend Webster in his dictionary says a Protestant is any Christian who is not a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox Catholic, or any other branch of Christendom. A Protestant should not always be

seen just as someone who is not this or is not that, but a true Protestant should always be brought into proper focus as being someone who is for a certain path. And again I say because he is for that, necessity requires that he be against. Even that word Protestant stems from a word, the root meaning of which is proteste, meaning to stand before, in behalf of.

Now, what is a true Protestant? To begin with, you have a right to say that a true Protestant is one who has rediscovered the act of redemption in Jesus Christ and has made it personally applicable to his own soul without the aid of any intermediary, without the aid even of the devices of the church. That is the true Protestant. Because this happens, then the true Protestant says, "I will live my life on that basis of commitment to Jesus Christ, and I shall so talk about Him that I won't have much time to talk about the Pope. I shall so talk about Jesus Christ that I won't have too much time to talk about even the Virgin Mary. I shall so talk about Jesus Christ who died on Calvary for me that I won't have too much time to talk about a variety of schemes and plans and methods and programs designed to offer a man salvation, more in the name of the church than in the name of Jesus Christ."

A true Protestant is he who, knowing this to be true, orders his daily life on that basis and lives the life that is completely commensurate with the gospel that he proclaims and with the gospel that he claims. When you see this picture, Martin Luther, tonight, or if you've seen it before, you remember that at a rather repulsive moment, the Friar of Wittenberg is walking down the street and he encounters a drunk lying in the gutter--sad, weak, miserable figure of humanity, debased. Martin Luther says something to him about going to confession, Martin Luther says something about Jesus Christ. The drunk pulls out from inside his cloak a piece of paper and he says, "See?" Now, presumably he had gotten that paper from John Tetzel, who had been a seller of indulgences, who had told people

that if they gave so much money to help build St. Peter's at Rome, they could get a piece of paper that would assure them that their sins for so many days or so long a period of time would be forgiven. That was all that was necessary, a piece of paper: "I, John Brown, because of what I have given, I am now forgiven". Martin Luther, who had come face to face with Jesus Christ, says, "This is not so, for when Jesus Christ forgave a man sin, He made an ethical demand upon him. He says, I forgive you but go thy way and sin no more." Martin Luther had no objection to their building what some of us may consider the most beautiful church in the world, St. Peter's in Rome. There are some of us who believe that our churches should be the loveliest, the finest, the best equipped, and the most beautiful building in the community, but this thing should never happen at the expense of a man's soul, and the true Protestant says, I am against this sort of thing because it is not true to the principle and the preaching and the saving grace of Jesus Christ. That's what it is to be a Protestant, my friend; to rediscover the fact of Jesus Christ and to make it personally applicable to your own life without the device, the means, the program of anything else.

It just doesn't happen in this church that this aisle is perfectly clear all the way to the altar; it's a symbol that we have. Any man has direct access to Jesus Christ. That's what it is to be a Protestant. Don't make the mistake of thinking that a Protestant is one who doesn't have to eat fish on Friday. Don't make the mistake of saying a Protestant is one who doesn't have to go to a church where the service is conducted in a language that he can't understand. And I'm not speaking facetiously. Don't make the mistake of saying that a Protestant is one who doesn't have to go to a church where the priest tells him how much he has to give. Don't make the mistake of saying a Protestant is one who doesn't have to go to a church where the priest tells him what he must believe or be excommunicated from the church and the sacraments of the

church withheld.

It's an unfortunate thing that in some communities because of these superficialities, as we deal with them, we become closer sometimes to non-Christian people than people who also have the name of Jesus Christ. It's an unfortunate thing that in some communities when a Protestant church is burned down, it was the Jewish synagogue that offered them a place in which they could hold their services before the priest of the Roman Catholic church would open the doors of his church to them. It's an unfortunate thing that because of our accentuation of things that are not basic, we continue to build up barriers between Christians.

And a true Protestant is one who will never say that his Roman Catholic brother is not a believer in Jesus Christ. A true Protestant is one who will say any man, regardless of his national origin, regardless of the ^{path} ~~fact~~ that he may take on a Sunday morning to a Christian church, any man who believes in Jesus Christ and takes advantage of the act of redemption for his own soul and in faith believes and then lives a life on that basis, that man is a believer in Christ and a doer of his word and is entitled--now get this--is entitled, so it seems to me, to the title the true Protestant.

And if you want something uncomfortable for your soul this morning, it could be that some people who do not embrace the Protestant tradition as you and I know it, who might even be numbered in the Roman Catholic Church, might be more deserving of the term Protestant than some of us who, believing in Jesus Christ, fail to accept completely the gift of His love, the gift of His grace, and then to order our lives on that basis.

The true Protestant is not found simply in a particular moment in history. The true Protestant is always on the march and is always found in the heart and soul of a man who stands up to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and when he sets his life at that key, he may have to differ with other people at

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particular points, but he differs with them here and he differs with them there only because he happens to be standing here directly in front of Jesus Christ.

Now the purpose of this sermon this morning has not been primarily to allow you to see yourself as someone who is not a Roman Catholic; it simply comes to lay upon your soul the question, Am I a Protestant in the truest sense?

Sermon delivered by The Rev. Raymond Shaheen at 9:30 a.m. service only

Transcribed from tape by Ruth P. Doak

Sunday, November 11, 1956

"By Faith's Light Touch."
Father 9:21-22

Pastor Shaheen

You may call her, my friend, anyone of three things. She has been called a superstitious soul, so if you want to, you might find a number of people who will agree with you. I am referring to that woman who had been sick for twelve long years. She had an issue of blood that would not stop. She had gone to one doctor after another, always, hoping, hoping, hoping that he might be able to do something for her. She had tried everything. Her friends without number had suggested this remedy or that. Maybe in her misery she had been driven to becoming superstitious. Anything might be worth trying. So you can call her, if you want to, a superstitious soul, this woman who edged her way in from the crowd and touched the hem of the garment of Jesus Christ. For she said within herself, If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole. She would not have to look into his eye, she would not have to talk to him, she would only have to touch.

Every adult Jewish male wore a long flowing garment, the four corners of which had tassels, tassels made out of wool, either white or blue, and so she thought if I can but touch that part of him, no more, just that much of his garment, a miracle will be wrought. At the drop of the word in the Near East a crowd will thickly gather, and I have a feeling that there is no crowd in all the world like the crowd in the Near East. You might say a ^{crowd} ~~crowd~~ is a crowd, no matter where you may find it, but you ought to see a crowd in the Near East, all the frenzied activities, all these motions, all these ejaculations, always someone trying to do something at the expense of somebody else. Now crowds gathered quickly in the Near East whenever somebody came who had a strange reputation. This time, so far as this man was concerned, he had a number of things being said about him. They referred to him as an _____, one who went from one community to another _____ drew people like a magnet. And then in addition to that, he could preach, and people in the Near East would listen intently to any man who believed what he had to say. Then, as though it were an unusually brilliant thing about him, he could perform miracles. The blind could see, the deaf could hear, the lame could walk. No wonder the crowd had gathered and the crowd would attract all

kinds of people, regardless of their condition or the circumstances -- and so she was there.

When she came, according to the Gospel lesson for today, she edged her way near Him, she touched the hem of his garment. You may call it superstition if you want to. I am not going to. You may, in the second place, you may say of the woman -- remember, you can say one of three things -- you may she she is a robber. She came to steal a blessing. She didn't ask for it; she didn't come directly and confront Jesus; she just slipped in and while nobody was looking, she touched (?) it. You may say she couldn't behave like that . She had already heard that there was a man who was a ruler. He amounted to something. His reputation was established in the community. He had just made a claim on Jesus Christ. He had just gotten an appointment. "Come, miracle worker, my daughter is even now dead. I believe if you will only come to her, you can make her live again." She had seen, she had heard how this man had come and pre-empted the time of Jesus Christ. His engagement book now was filled for the day and he was moving on, and the crowd was following him. But in her need she was desperate.

She might belong to the ^{group} ~~esrps~~-(?) of those who tried God. "We have tried everything else, so why not try God? Don't lose your chance." But she could not come; she was not heard. Frail, haggard, worn, far from being attractive, weakened by this constant flow of blood for twelve years -- so she said to herself, I will just slip in; I will just touch -- because she had been told, and it was common knowledge, that for some of these miracle workers virtue would follow right through. You only had to make contact somewhere. All right, when no one is looking, I will take; I will not ask, I will not *beg* . So, if you want to, my friend, you can call her a robber, one who steals from heaven's treasury of grace, one who does not ask, one who takes. You may call her that if you want to. You can call her anyone of three things. I am not going to call her a robber. You know what I am going to call her. I am going to call her a woman who had a faith with a light touch, a woman whose faith was tender, a

woman whose faith was in the embryonic stage, a woman who was taking her first step in the direction of God. And I shall not belittle her. I have come this morning to sing her praise. I have come this morning to sing the praise of anyone who will take any path, high or low, that leads to the feet of Jesus Christ. I don't think she was very

things that were different. I think all she knew about Jesus Christ had been told to her by somebody else.

It is a tremendously wonderful thing when a faith has been developed because someone teaches you, someone cultivates your religious knowledge and trust. That is a wonderful thing. In your time of need you have no misgiving whatsoever. You know -- you believe -- you trust -- you ask -- you accept. A wonderful thing to have a faith like that wholly developed. There are some people who have that kind of faith. They have been born into that kind of home; they have been trained that way; they have been able to discern all the that are on the face of God. But there are some folk who have never had that advantage. There are some folks who simply have gathered here and there an impression that has been casually dropped. This woman was like that. She hadn't a strong faith that would make her come and stop Jesus Christ in his path to say, Hold on; I have had this thing for twelve years now. I believe that you can work a miracle. I am asking you to do it right now. she could have had the faith my daughter is even now dead, but come. You speak the word and I know that she will live. That faith, my friend, was in contrast to that you have to look over -- Frail, haggard and worn, weakened by this constant flow of blood for a dozen years -- you can only come with the faith of a light touch, that will not grasp, that will not grip, but simply lightly.

I sing her praises. Whatever the path she took, she took because she knew it would lead her to the feet of Jesus Christ.

Now here is an interesting thing for you. I suppose it should be said parenthetically. We don't know her name. And what is more, we don't ~~all~~ know the name of a single soul who ever spoke to her of Jesus Christ, and yet she took her initial step on the basis of what she had heard other people say. There is something for you, my friends.

Did it ever occur to you in all the miracles performed by Jesus Christ in the lives of all the people who received the blessing; there is the vast number of the unknown who have been the heralds of Jesus Christ, who had paved the way, who had dropped the word, and in the dropping of the word had given a measure of encouragement to other people to come. You have this woman who came to Jesus Christ, and even with the light touch of faith, she came. And her only justification for coming is what she had gathered by hearsay of what other people had said about him.

Beloved, I stand here at this desk this morning wholly aware that I am charged with the responsibility to be the shepherd and bishop of your soul. Therefore, I ask ~~yes~~ you, when in the last great day the book of the redeemed shall be opened, how many names do you think might be reported and wholly claimed by Jesus Christ, names of people who took their first step towards Him, because of something ~~they~~ they had heard you say? I shudder and do not hesitate to tell you that I think of the throngs of folks who have never attempted to take a step in the direction of Jesus Christ, and who have been failing to do it if for no other reason but for this: They have not caught the overtone in your voice nor in mine; they have yet to catch the accent of unquestionable faith on your part and mine; they have yet to find anything about you and me that would inspire them to come to the Christ that we say we love, worship and serve.

Suppose, my friend, all that this woman had ever heard of Jesus Christ had come to her from the lips of people who did not believe -- and there were people like that in that day. They called him a liar, they called him a fake, they even said he was linked (?) with the devil. Suppose she would have travelled with people of that like. ~~light~~. She would never have taken that first step toward Jesus Christ. But God be praised and God be thanked, she had met people who had seen him, who had heard him, who had received the blessing. And there was something about their business that made her edge her way in from the crowd and touch the garment of Jesus Christ. A faith with a light touch, but a faith with a touch, nonetheless.

Up to this point, beloved, I have been focusing your eye upon ^{woman} ~~the~~ who was sick; I have been asking you to think about the people who had said a good word about Jesus

Christ. These are all parts of great of this striking episode in the faith of the new Testament. But that is only a part of the truth. The tremendous thing that is almost incredible to accept is the fact that Jesus Christ paid attention to her. He stopped; he looked for her; and he wasn't content until his eye met hers. In another record here in the New Testament there are those who record it in this manner: And Jesus perceiving that virtue had gone out of him, said, Who touched me. The disciple impatiently /said, Who touched you? But everyone is touching you here in the crowd. As much as to say, Are you beside yourself? You wanted to know who touched you, and the crowd was forever after you? But the great resources of Heaven are being taxed, and Jesus Christ wants to see the person who has done it.

It is a wonderful thing about Christ. His mind simply was not set on one person at the expense of somebody else. Sure, he was going to the house of JARUS. Sure, he answered the need in that place, but in the meantime, did he ignore this person? In the meantime, did he forget about her? God, my friend, never pays attention to someone at the expense of somebody else. Your need, your claim, is just as great in his sight as the next one.

When you think about this miracle, do not lose yourself thinking about the person who received the blessing, or those who introduced her to Jesus Christ. Focus your eye completely for a while on the face of Jesus Christ. There are those who tell us that this woman was nobody, but when Jesus Christ thought of her, she was somebody. Then she becomes everybody. Because everyone of us can see ourselves in the situation -- nobody as far as the world is concerned. It is amazing sometimes to see how some of us can drop out of circulation and the world goes on just the same. Most of us but in the eye of God we are someone. Even the writer of the Gospel record puts it for us so beautifully: Jesus said, Somebody has touched me. And Jesus calls her by name and wants to give the blessing.

So this morning, my friend, I cannot tell how you have happened to come to Jesus Christ. I do not know what path you have taken; I do not know how much you believe about him, or in him; I do not know what you have been told; and I do not know how frequently you call upon him in faith, but this I know -- No matter what path you may

take, if it leads directly to his feet, he will pay you attention. He will listen. He has a blessing to give. Don't think for a single minute that you have nothing to give God unless your faith is wholly . Henry Martin, the great missionary, once saw a native come before a statue and reverently kiss the feet of that statue, and Henry Martin, firm believer in Jesus Christ and the one true God, said to himself, With all my learning, with all the knowledge that I have of God, is my faith as simple as that? Would it bring me directly to the feet of Jesus Christ?

I can't gauge the integrity of your devotion; I cannot completely put my finger upon the pulse beat of your soul, but this I would say: Even though yours ^{should} be the faith with a light touch, touch Jesus Christ nonetheless and let him take over from that point. He is prepared to do it. And once you touch him, no matter how lightly, if you stick around long enough, he will start calling you by name, and you will want to look him straight in the eye, and he will want to put a blessing in your hand, and he will want to bestow peace in your heart. How do I know? It happened to a woman who touched the hem of his garment, and she went away remembering forever the look upon his face when his eyes found hers.

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Sunday, December 2, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

"The Coming Christ" is the general title for the series of sermons to be preached from this pulpit on the Sunday mornings during the Advent season. Now let me tell you what will be the inspiration for each of those sermons. You will find it in the Collect for the day. The Collect is the particular prayer which the Church uses on that particular Sunday of Advent.

Perhaps it may be a bit of news to you, but this Collect has an exceedingly interesting history. In the days of the Christian Church -- that is, in the very beginning -- they were want to gather in front of the Church before they might go inside to begin their formal worshipping. The people would collect themselves together and there, before the formal service would begin, they would have what we might call a preliminary prayer meeting. They would engage themselves in prayer to Almighty God even before their worship would begin. And like as not, the presiding deacon or the officer of the congregation would suggest that they pray. Some of the prayers might have been heard; some of them might have been prayers from the depths of one's heart so that no one else would hear, but nonetheless, in this preliminary period, the people that collected themselves together before Church would begin to pray. Then, I think, it must have been that the officiating minister must have said, Now let us join our hearts together; now let us pray. And do you know what he would do? He would gather together -- he would make a kind of collection of their prayers -- and then he would make a prayer on their behalf, declaring in his prayer all of their intentions. Now that is where you get the word, "Collect", from the people who had collected together and with the collections of petitions that had been made as these people came to pray.

The prayer is almost a perfect prayer. There is always in each Collect at least one thing in particular that is being prayed for. These, I submit to you this morning are veritable gems and some of these Collects go back to the Third, the Second or perhaps the Fourth Century of the Christian Church, so that when you and I pray them, we are not using something which has been conjured up overnight, but rather we are linking

hearts and souls with worshipping Christians throughout the ages.

Now, my friend, did it ever occur to you that when a man prays he gets something of an image of his own soul? Everytime a man falls on his knees, there is some sure reflection of his own nature, because if you want to know what a man is basically, try to tune in -- and I don't mean it irreverently -- try to tune in on his prayers. What is the thing that he wants most? What is the type of thing he will talk about when he talks with God? Now a prayer will always give us some insight into a man's character, and by the very same guide (?), a true prayer will always give us some insight as to the type of God to whom a man prays. God's character can be revealed for us according to our approach as we pray. These Collects then, these prayers that are prayed during Advent will tell us something of the character of God, as well as the character of man.

Now here on the First Sunday in Advent when the worshippers had collected themselves together, this was the prayer that was made: Stir up, we beseech thee, thy power, O Lord, and come; that by thy protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by thy mighty deliverance.

This handful of Christians in that day who had collected themselves together, well now, what was it that they wanted most at the hand of God? God we want you to come, and when you come, we want you to come as our protector.

This must be said to their credit. First of all, they knew that God would visit the earth; that God himself would come to his people. And then in the second place, they had a pretty good idea of the kind of God they needed to satisfy the basic desires of their souls. When they got on their knees, that band of early Christians, they knew that they were sinners. They did not talk about anything else. They talked about their sins and the need to be protected against the and they wanted a God who would come to be their protector.

"Stir up, we beseech thee, thy power, O Lord, and come; that by thy coming we may be protected from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by thy mighty deliverance." This, O God, is what we need most. This is what we want you to be to us. -- A protector.

I cannot make too much of that, my friend, this matter of knowing the kind of God that you want to come to visit you to the end that when he does come, you might be able to recognize him. It is no secret. For a thousand years or more the faithful of the Jewish ~~///~~ church had been praying for God to come, but alas when he did come, the great majority of them could not recognize him. They did not know him to be their Christ. Do not let that happen to you and to me. We who pray for the coming Christ do well to understand as best we can the kind of Christ it is who comes to us that in his coming we may see him as he is. For the early church, they knew the Christ they wanted -- a protector; someone to defend them. A protector is one who throws a cover around someone to shield him and to defend him; to support, to sustain. To the credit of these people, they wanted God to be that very thing to them.

May I suggest to you that the protecting Christ can protect us in two different ways. First of all, he can protect us by his power from our weakness. Not everyone will say that. It is a lamentable thing about contemporary man that he thinks himself sufficient. He thinks himself completely adequate. There are more people than you may realize who seem to think they can get along very well without God. But there are some who have done some mighty serious thinking and they know very well that they are not adequate. They know that their finest efforts go by default. They realize the somber fact that we are dependent creatures. We have need for God. These men and women who made up the early Church were perfectly aware of that. They could not think of living in a world where they could not go to God for help because they needed help. I like to think, my friend, that is one reason why you and I are here this morning. We know very well that we cannot go on through life without God. We have come here this morning -- let us face it -- to get God's help, to be protected against the frustrations of our weaknesses.

Next Sunday evening at seven o'clock there is going to be a special service in Saint Luke Church. A new congregation is going to be established -- Trinity Lutheran Church in the Garrett Park-Kensington area will be formally organized next Sunday night. Ray Hartzell is the pastor of that new church family. Some time ago I said to Ray, Tell

me, it must be a thrilling thing to found a church, to visit people and to interest them in a new congregation. (There are some of you here this morning who have precious memories of what happened some sixteen years ago here in Silver Spring when Saint Luke Church was born.) I said to Ray, "Tell me about your joys, tell me about your trials, your difficulties in getting a church started." And he said to me, "Pastor, you may not realize it, but it is not always as easy as one may think." And then as I remember his conversation it went something like this: Maybe we have been a little slower in getting on the scene (?); maybe the homes have been established in the areas given to me for over a period of five or six years ago. Now in a number of homes where I visited and I speak to them about the church, they give me to understand -- some of them -- that they don't have much need for the church. They have ^{gotten} ~~get~~ along very well, these people, for years without going to church. They are eager, they are ambitious, they have gotten one promotion after another the past several years. They have been getting along rather decently with their marriage. Up to this point there has been very little sickness or tragedy. They have no need for God. If ever a church would have a challenge, it would be there. If ever there would be a hard and difficult path to take, it would be in the hearts and souls of people who feel they have no need for God. But that isn't true of you and me, is it?

We know that we can't go through life without God. We know our weaknesses and our inadequacies, and we come to Jesus Christ to be protected against the frustrations that come through our weaknesses.

There are two types of people who can run a dastardly course. One is the man with the superiority complex who feels himself quite sufficient. The other is his opposite -- the man with the inferiority complex and the man who always feels himself inadequate against the strain and stress of life. It is a very grievous thing to be in the second category, to say nothing of the first. The healthiest man is the man who is aware of his weaknesses and knows where he can get strength.

The Apostle Paul said -- now mark you this -- I can do anything through Christ who strengtheneth me. It is a thrilling thing to read the pages of the New Testament and discover how saint after saint was the man who was weak who became strong because

he was protected by Jesus Christ. Beloved, it might amaze you sometime to discover the things that you could do, and what is more, it might amaze you sometime to discover the kind of person you could become once you look to Jesus Christ to protect you against your weakness.

In the second place, when Jesus Christ comes into the world as protector, he comes as a protector who through his presence can defend us against the devil and the arrow (?) of death. Whether you are aware of it or not, the devil has a price on each one of us, and the more we become desirous of virtue, the more he wants us and traps us. When Jesus Christ comes into a man's soul as protector, Jesus Christ is the only one who can defend us against the clutch of the devil.

I once witnessed a very interesting dramatic presentation entitled -- and a very grave title, too -- "Shadow of the Devil". It was the story of a woman with a past; the story of a woman who became ashamed of what she had been. She was transformed by the grace of God. But this is what she had to remember, that even though she became a changed woman, she had to recognize the fact that in practically every turn in the road ahead there was always the devil waiting for her and his shadow was cast before her path. There was never a time when she was completely free from his influence. And the story ended on this note: That even in the hour of death waiting for Jesus Christ to claim her forever, she was able to catch a flinting (?) glimpse of the devil. The price tag of the saint is always high in the estimation of the devil, and he is forever after those difficult to get and those who seek to claim the grace of Jesus Christ. There are some of us who believe that it is only as Jesus Christ comes into our lives that we are protected, given a cloak, made immune forever to the high regard of the evil eye.

Over in London in one of the slum sections there was a man by the name of Quinton Hoag (?) who gave his life to minister to other people people could pass by. What is it that Hoag looked at Look at their environment Why do you waste your life on them? But Hoag was that Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer and to die for every man, and Hoag felt that these people had to know it, too. One of the men who came under his influence had been a habitual criminal. everything

that was in the book and was yet to be written. But after Quinton Hoag came into his life, he had come to appreciate Jesus Christ and he was redeemed. One day appearing before a judge who had asked him to come in, not because he had a charge against him but because he was curious to know what had happened, and he asked the criminal to explain -- the one-time criminal to explain -- and he said, Your Honor, I will tell you. You know very well what I had been at one time. Now it is different. You want to know the reason why? One day I met a man called Quinton Hoag. We used to refer to him as Q H, and he introduced me to Jesus Christ and I have never been the same. Hoag is dead now, but occasionally I find the old temptation comes back. But this is what I do." And then he reached for his pocket and pulled out his wallet and fingered a dirtied and torn picture. It was a photograph of old Hoag, and he said, "Judge, everytime I am tempted, in every moment of weakness, I take out the picture of Hoag and I look at it. And then I seem to be protected -- I am protected."

Most of us would like to take that illustration to heart. Life still has its way of tempting us, even (?) at the hour perhaps when we think it isn't so life has a way of still trying to us away from the heaven (?) we want most. at the end of the rope. And whenever that moment comes some of us try to think of Jesus Christ we have no other way of putting it then. We say, Someone protects us, and beloved, Christ is coming. The coming Christ will appear. He stands at the door of everyman's heart.

What is it that you want in your Christ? He is my friend, God's best gift. Why not take him as God intends him to be -- the best that he has to offer. And for some of us right now the best would be one who will protect us because we cannot shield ourselves.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power and come, that by thy protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by thy mighty deliverance. Even so, Come Lord Jesus.

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Sunday, December 9, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The general theme for these sermons the Sunday mornings of Advent is "The Coming Christ" and they are based on a study of the Collects for the Day. The Collect, as you know, is the particular prayer which the church uses on a given Sunday during the Advent season or any season of the church year. The prayer that the church has been using on this second Sunday in Advent is: "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, our hearts to make ready the way of thine only begotten son, that by his coming, we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds."

Do you remember what I told you last Sunday morning when this series was begun, how when the church was young the faithful would gather, perhaps in a home or outside the door of the church before the formal service was due to be started, and as they would come together for this preliminary hour, they would have a session of prayer. The presiding officer or the deacon would invite each of them to make a prayer, and after the prayer period was concluded, the presiding officer or the deacon would gather up all of the petitions in one prayer, as much as to say, "Dear God, This is what we are saying now collectively. Whatever else each of us might have said before, together this is the thing that we want most."

Now that is where you get the name for this particular prayer each Sunday of the Church year. It is a Collect, so named because it came when the people had collected together and because this prayer is a kind of collection of their petitions in one. The prayers are veritable gems -- no wasting of the words -- each petition aimed directly for the heart of God and always tremendously in earnest.

"Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son, that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds."

Now as I come to preach this sermon this morning, I come, first of all, with a question to be raised, a question that I am going to put directly to you. My friend, tell me, do you want to make this prayer your prayer? When you use this prayer of the church, can you rightfully claim it as a prayer of your own? Be careful, how you answer, because this is an exceedingly difficult prayer to pray. Stir up our

hearts, O Lord; Stir up our hearts. Tell me, honestly, is that what you want God to do?

For the most part, many people want God to keep them pretty much as they have been, complacent, satisfied. "We are getting along all right, God. Thank you for what you have been able to do, but if you don't mind, let me be as I am." It may be a striking thing to discover sometimes how many people there are who are satisfied with their sins, enjoying themselves very much. But here, if you make this prayer, you are asking God to disturb you. Is that what you want God to do?

There are many people who want God to be the comforter, to pat them gently on the back and say, "Now, my friend, Come now, everything will be all right." There are those, who when they pray want God to be the eternal companion, the friend and the brother. But where is the man who is honest enough when he prays he wants God to be the great agitator? He wants God to be the one who can disturb him? But that is precisely what you are asking if you want to pray this prayer: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, Stir up our hearts. God, the agitator; God, the disturbing influence in my life; God keeping me forever unsatisfied with what I am.

Bless their souls when they prayed this prayer. They were very, very realistic and very honest with themselves, too, because they knew something of history. When the church was young they remembered that Jesus Christ had already visited the earth when he came. After centuries of longing there were many people who never received him, and the reason -- well they knew it -- because their hearts had been hardened; they were calloused, and they were impervious to the call of the Holy Spirit. They were realistic because they knew very well that the only dwelling place for Jesus Christ is in a man's heart. And they did not want it to happen again that when he should return their hearts should not have been made ready.

This is the prayer of a brave man; this is the prayer of a daring soul; this is the prayer of a man who is realistic enough to know that unless God pricks his conscience, unless God disturbs him, God cannot really come to him. Be careful what you say to God, my friend. God has a way of listening. God has a way of hearing.

To you, my friends, who before this altar have this day confessed, or confessed again, the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour, let me remind you of a very somber fact. From this day onward, perhaps as not before you should be very sensitive to the things of God. You should be sorely touched by the grief of the world -- by man's sin, by man's misery. There should be no bell tolling anywhere for man's sorrow or anxiety save as that bell has also tolled in your heart. Ask God always to keep you sensitive to the things that are precious in his sight because that is the thing that the inn-keeper missed. There was no room in the inn for Jesus Christ because first of all there was no room in the heart of the inn-keeper for the things of God. A maiden pure in travail, a tired peasant having come to a man's door, and the man has nothing to set before these weary people. The world is distressed and the world is distraught. The inn-keeper had no room for them in the inn because he had no room in his heart for the things of God. He wasn't sensitive to the things of God.

Stir up our hearts, O Lord. Do you really want to pray that prayer? I hope you will because only as God stirs up our hearts are they kept from becoming hardened. Then when one reads this prayer, Stir up our hearts to make ready the way of our only begotten Son that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds, make ready, my heart, O God, because I want Jesus Christ to come and because not until Jesus Christ comes will I be enabled to serve you.

Now that, too, is the prayer of a realistic soul. For some of us our greatest delight in life will be to serve God. Our friends in the Westminster in the Reformed churches, the Presbyterian Church, has as its What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God, and that is why God has put us here, to serve him, to do the things that please him. But how can we serve God, how can we please him unless we know what the mind of God is? Unless we have some kind of help by which to do it? Isn't that one reason why Jesus Christ came into the world -- to help us to do the things that please God?

Stir up our hearts, O God, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son that by his coming we then shall be enabled to serve thee.

Now I am constrained to stop here at this point for a little while and to suggest to you a very healthy discipline. I should be very happy indeed if sometime you should be accosted by a Jew, and the Jew would say to you, Come now, do you honestly believe what the Christian church teaches? I should be very happy if a Jew would stop you and stare you in the eye and say, Do you honestly believe that the Messiah has come? Then you will attempt an answer, won't you? And you will say, Yes. And he will say, How Come? Show me. You may quote scripture; you may read to him pages of the new Testament; you may tell him something about your own personal experience; and you may think that you are satisfying the question mark in his soul until he counters and he will say, Tell me now, isn't it rather blasphemy to believe that Jesus Christ is here; that Jesus Christ is operating in the world when -- and then he will list them for you; he will name certain sins; he will pattern (?) off the miseries and the anxieties of mankind; he will think of his own people -- six to ten million Jews who have died in concentration camps, barbarism, the like of which the cruel emperors never knew.

And he will say to you, Do you mean to tell me that Jesus Christ is in a world allowing such things to happen? If the Messiah came to establish the kingdom, isn't it blasphemy to believe that the kingdom is here when these things are happening? Your Jewish friend could say to you, Tell me, how do you account for it? Twice in your lifetime and in mine -- we who are still under fifty -- twice in our lifetime the world has been set on fire and the catastrophe has had its greatest flame from so-called Christian nations? He waits for an answer. Do you believe that the Messiah has come? Do you call this the Kingdom of God on earth? Then he is yet to hurl the greatest of onslaughts: He may say to you, Are you aware of the fact that today in our time the world is nearer to world suicide, the peoples of the world are closer to self-destruction than at any time since the dawn of history? Is this the earmark of the Kingdom of God? What then will you say to that man? We who say that Jesus Christ has come, We who wait for the second coming -- What will you say? Are you uncomfortable? Could you answer to his satisfaction, or even to yours, on such questions?

Beloved, there is an answer. Here is the answer: The world will never be saved, the new order will never be established until Jesus Christ is first established in the individual heart. Exhibit "A", testimony at hand for that fact -- Yourself! Most of us have not the peace that we want. Most of us know how we go on spending (?) one day after another. Most of us know how we haven't been pleasing God. And if we haven't done it in our own hearts, how then can we expect it to happen on the face of the earth? And that is exactly the reason why the early church prayed this prayer: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make way the ready (Note: That's the way you said it!) of thine only begotten son, that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds.

This is the crux of the situation. These wars to which my Jewish friend referred? What is war? War is always to be seen as the devilish attempt on the part of man to wrest the control of the universe out of the hand of God. War is settling man's problems man's way. After war has run its course, no matter which side of the fence you may be, that is the summary. War is man's diabolical attempt to wrest from the hand of God the control of the universe.

And not so long as ^{there aren't (?)} enough of us to come to God and say, Dear God, Let God so dwell in our heart that by his strength and by his power I can do the things that please thee. But there aren't enough of us who make this prayer. There are too many of us who are going it by ourselves. "I won't need your help today, God. I will manage by myself." And then we get ourselves in one sweet mess after another. This is a tremendous prayer. Dear God, Let Jesus come into my heart that I may be by Him enabled to serve thee.

That is how miracles happen. You can't reason it out. You can't have one legitimate argument after another to explain the Christian life. The Christian life is a life of power and peace to the individual who knows that he has been pardoned and Jesus Christ is in his heart. Then he leads a transformed life, and one of its hallmarks is being enabled to serve God with a pure mind, and that word "pure mind" means single-mindedly above all else. Let me do the things that please you, God."

I must close with an illustration that should be richly significant for each of us. It is a story that portrays for you the great religions of the world traveling along the highway of life, and each religion is represented by a particular individual who comes to a certain stop (?) along the highway of life and finds there by the side a fellow pilgrim who has fallen. And the belief of one of the great religions of the world is this: "It is a shame that you have fallen. I am very sorry indeed." That is all that that religion has to offer. Another of the great religions of the world is represented by a man who comes, and when he sees the fallen one he says: "It is a pity, too, that you have fallen, but let me tell you something. Had you kept my Ten Commandments, had you obeyed, this would not have happened to you."

The story doesn't end there, Thank God. The carpenter's son appears. He never says a word. He simply stoops, lowers his hand, takes hold of the fallen one, and as the fallen one allows him to take hold of him, he is lifted up. He becomes empowered. He is enabled to walk.

It is a parable for you and for me -- in our weakness, in our distraught condition, pray for the eternal pilgrim who most certainly will come your way, and when he does, do not refuse his hold upon your life, for only as he holds you, can you be helped.

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THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

This morning's sermon is the second in a series entitled "The Coming Christ". The four sermons during Advent are based upon a study of the Collect for the day, the particular prayer which the church has been using for a number of centuries on each particular Sunday in Advent. "Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son so that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds." You remember what I told you last Sunday? How when the church was young, the people would gather together, they would collect themselves together, outside the door of the church, or perhaps in someone's home before the service proper would be started, and there as they had gathered together, they would have a kind of preliminary prayer meeting and the presiding officer or deacon would invite them, each in his own way, to address Almighty God, to make a prayer, lay bare his soul, to talk to God in that period about the most important single thing at that time in his life. When the period would be over, the presiding officer or deacon would ask them to join their hearts together as he would pray in their behalf. And his prayer invariably would be a collection of their petitions as they had gathered together as much as to say "O God, this is what they have been trying to tell me. O God, as far as all of us are concerned, collectively, this is the thing that we want most. And then he would pray in their behalf. That prayer has come down to us through the centuries and it's known as part of the Propers for the day, the Collect. Maybe when he would make the prayer, they would be tremendously in earnest to hear what he was going to say. How now would he interpret our reaction? How now would he speak to God in our behalf? What does he think is the most important single thing that we want God to hear from our lips and our hearts right now? Maybe it wasn't just curiosity on their part that made them listen for his prayer. They wanted to make certain that he asked aright. You and I have come in their steps this morning; we are praying the prayer that the church has been praying for centuries. "Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son, so that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds".

I am going to ask you a question right now. Do you honestly think that you want to pray that prayer? We want to be able to search our hearts before we talk to God because God has a way of listening to our prayers. God has a way of hearing. Be careful, my friend, God might answer. Take heed what you say to him. So I ask you very carefully, do you want to pray this prayer? This is a prayer, my friend, of a brave man, the prayer of a daring soul, the prayer of a man who, without hesitation, is willing to ask God to stir him. That is about the last thing that some of us want God to do. We would much rather have God go his way and allow us to go our way. Why can't we be content with our own little sins? God, give us a charitable glance but don't make us uncomfortable. Who among us is brave enough to fall upon his knees and ask God to be for him the great agitator; who among us is brave enough to ask God to disturb his soul, to unfetter him, to make him uncomfortable? But that, my friend, is precisely what these people were willing to do. When the prayer was made in their behalf, it was a prayer that God would stir them up, make them uneasy and, if you please, uncomfortable.

There are many of us who want a God who will comfort us, there are many of us who want God to be our friend, there are many of us who want God to be our eternal pilgrim through Christ, there are many of us who want God, through Christ, to pat us on the back but where is the soul who wants God to take his finger and to shake it at him? Where is the man who wants God to take his hand and to give him a shove and a push? That is exactly what this prayer is asking for. Stir up our hearts, O Lord, stir us. But it so happened that these people were very honest with themselves and far more realistic than you may care to admit. They had remembered that once upon a time Jesus Christ had come. They had remembered that in the plan of God, the heavens were parted and God's greatest gift came to earth, and they also remember as they turn the pages of history that there were many people who, when he had come, did not receive him and they were students enough of human nature to know that they did not receive Jesus Christ because their hearts had been hardened, they had become calloused and conditioned against the things of the spirit; and now these people, when they fall upon their knees, they admit that they don't want it to happen again. When Jesus Christ comes, they want their hearts to have been stirred so that they would have

been made ready. Make no mistake about it. The innkeeper who refused to give place in his inn to Mary and Joseph could have found room in the inn if first of all he could have room in his heart for the things that were precious in the sight of God, for precious in the sight of God is the trial, the anxiety, the travail of every single human soul and if the innkeeper would have had a heart that was sensitive to the things that were sensitive to God, then he would have turned his inn inside out to find some place for a woman in distress to make a veritable cradle for God himself.

You want to pray this prayer, my friends? Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son so that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds. This is the prayer of a brave soul. It is also the prayer of an honest man who recognizes the fact that not until Jesus Christ comes into his heart will he be able to serve God aright.

The Westminster catechism of our Presbyterian friends reminds us, in the first question, what is the chief end of man. The answer: the chief end of man is to glorify God and there are some of us who also believe that man is here for only one purpose - to do God's work as we worship him - with our lives to do the things that are pleasing in the sight of God. But when a man is honest with himself, he recognizes the truth that he cannot of himself do the things that please God - he is weak - he is dependent. So these people in the days of the early church, when they were asking for Jesus Christ to come to their hearts, they were asking that he might come that through his coming they would be empowered, they would be strengthened in order to serve God.; and when Jesus Christ came to earth he came to show man what God is like, to reveal the nature of the Heavenly Father, to reveal the Father's will. Now when men and women found Christ in their hearts, they better understood God and a miracle happened. Once Jesus Christ was in their hearts, then they seemed better able to serve God and do the things that are pleasing in God's sight. As long as Jesus Christ is outside man's heart, that man can never adequately do God's will. It is only as Jesus Christ is in a man's heart that with a pure mind he shall be able to serve God. Isn't that one of the reasons why God saw fit to send Jesus into the world? For centuries they had had prophets, priests, kings,

patriarchs, Judges and each in turn was to tell the people something about God and God's will for their lives and God's purpose and God's plan. Somehow or other each in turn seemed to fail not only God but God's people so that in their great moment and time God said aright, "I will come myself; I will give my only begotten son to them that through him they cannot help but understand and that through him they shall become empowered. It would be good, healthy discipline for each of us if some time we should be confronted by a devout Jew and the devout Jew would look each of us straight in the eye and say "Now tell me, do you honestly believe that Jesus Christ has come? Do you honestly believe that the Messiah has visited the earth?" Then we would reply "Of course we do". We would quote scriptures, we would recite for them certain passages in the New Testament; we might be able to tell something of our own personal experiences. But then the devout Jew would come back and he will counter, he will say "But if Jesus Christ has come, if the Messiah has established himself in the hearts and souls of the people, answer me a question or two, will you?" And then the Jew will say to us: "How do you account for the fact that there is so much sin and suffering in the world if the Savior has already come?" Then he will say to us "How do you account for the fact that there is so much misery and so much unrest? How do you account for the fact, if your Christianity, your adoration of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is so wonderful, how do you account for the fact that the non-Christian religions of the world are on the march? And then very mindful of the fact that between six and ten million of his people had died in concentration camps in Europe, he will say to us "How do you account for the fact that if you say your Messiah has come and if there are so-called Christian nations in the world, how do you account for the fact that twice in our generation the world has been set on fire, if your Messiah has come"? How will you answer him, my friend, for his questions remain and they will not fade away. His questions have been raised ever since the dawn of the Christian Church and if they haven't been raised by him, they have been raised by other non-Christian friends, and what is more, they have been raised in our own minds by some segment of our own nature. Then in your anxiety, then in your misery as you wait, wondering how you shall answer him,

he may remind you that right now, today, in this year 1956, the nations of the world are closer to world suicide than they have ever been before, since the dawn of time. Do you think I ought to repeat that for you? It is so seldom that we allow ourselves to face it. That is a terrible thing to recognize that today, despite all the technical advance of our civilizations, despite the fact that two thousand years of Christianity the world right now is nearer to world destruction than it has ever been before since the dawn of time? How will you answer me? What will you say to that fact?

The prayer of the ancient church remains. "Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of thine only begotten son so that by his coming we may be enabled to serve thee with pure minds". This is the answer. Jesus Christ has come but the world will never be redeemed until men are redeemed, the world will never be set right until the individual has allowed Jesus Christ to establish his Kingdom in his individual heart. That is the answer. The fault does not lie with Jesus Christ - the fault does not lie with God. God has been saying to us for two thousand years. Here is the answer; here is the way; this is what I am giving you. But man has been human enough, man has been foolish enough, man has been sinful enough to say "God, thank you, but I think today and tomorrow I will try it by myself"; and that is the answer to your inadequacy and to my inadequacy. Day in and day out we are not being enabled by Jesus Christ to serve God. We have tried to run it by ourselves and war is always man's daring attempt to wreck the control of the universe out of the hand of God. That is the answer. God has given Jesus Christ but where are the people who have prayed that by his coming we may be enabled, that by Christ we shall be strengthened, that by Christ we shall be empowered to serve God with a pure mind. That pure mind means to serve God single-mindedly, to serve God with all we are, with all we have. This, my friend, is a tremendous prayer. "Stir up our hearts, O Lord." Shake us, prod us, make us uneasy and uncomfortable. May we make ready our hearts so that by the coming of Jesus Christ we may be enabled.

Do you want a miracle to happen in your life? Then ask God to send the enabling Christ, the Christ who takes over, the Christ who empowers. Beloved, I have seen it happen, I have seen it happen. And that is why, of all the things that I could tell you now on this Second Sunday in Advent, I ask you to fall upon your knees and to ask God to send into your life the Christ who can enable you to serve God with a pure mind. My friend, don't misunderstand me, don't ask for the wrong Christ. Ask for the Christ of God that when he comes he will work the miracle.

There is a story that comes to us that typifies the great religions of the world. Each has a representative walking the path of life and on the highway of life there is a man who has fallen by the side of the road. One representative of a great religion passes by and says "Too bad, my friend, you haven't made it, have you? If only you could be as I am you might not be where you are". Another representative of the great religions of the world passes by and says "Ah, 'tis a pity indeed. If you would have had the Ten Commandments, if you would have kept them, if you had obeyed them, you would not be where you are". Then the legend has Jesus Christ coming along the way and Jesus Christ sees the fallen man and with nary a word as to ask why and how, he stretches forth his hand, - a hand through which there can pulsate power and peace and heart, but not until the man in his weakness will allow Jesus Christ to take hold of his hand will he be enabled to rise from his dire strait. The Christ of God for whom we ought to pray is the Christ who may find us where we are, then when we see him we ask him to lay hold upon us and as he does our lives become transformed and empowered.

The benediction.

12/16/56

Sunday, December 16, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon, the third in the series during Advent, has the general theme, "The Coming Christ". The sermons are based upon a study of the Collects, that particular prayer which is used on the Sundays of Advent. This morning the sermon is entitled, "The Enlightening Christ".

Now let me remind you how these Collects were first developed. When the church was young the people would gather together for a kind of preliminary prayer meeting before the formal service would be held. They prayed before they began to worship, and as they would be gathered outside the doors of the church or the meeting house or someone's home, the Presiding Officer would say to them, Let us pray. And he meant exactly what he said, and they did exactly what they were invited to do. They prayed. And each in turn would ask God for something. When this period of praying was brought to a close, the Presiding Officer would make a prayer in their behalf combining all of the petitions, as much as to say, "Now, God, this is what all of us want. This is the prayer of prayers that we now make."

Now I want to ask you a question. How enthusiastic do you think the "Amens" were when this prayer was first prayed, the Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent? "Lord, we beseech thee, give ear to our prayers, and lighten the darkness of our hearts, by thy gracious visitation." Once they had heard him make this prayer in their behalf, come now, honestly, do you think they shouted their Amens? Did they add their exclamation points? Well, maybe for the first part of the prayer. That first part of the prayer was a prayer that is a common desire of most of us. We want God to listen to us. We want a God who will accommodate himself to us. We want a God who will bend his ears. Most of us, if we are not willing to do what God tells us, at least we are willing to tell God a thing or two. I suppose maybe we, too, would shout an enthusiastic comment to this part of the prayer, "Lord, Listen to me; give ear to my prayer."

But then you come to the second part of the prayer, my friend. Could one be

just as enthusiastic at that point? Lord, we beseech thee, give ear to our prayers, (enlighten?) and lighten the darkness of our hearts by thy gracious visitation. Now let me hear their amens; better still, suppose I ask for yours. Do you want a God like that? Would you ask God to so visit your heart that when he comes he will reveal everything that is there? Do you want a God of light who when he comes he the darkness of your souls? Anything God . But that is the way these people prayed.

Interestingly enough, the Church has been praying that very same prayer for generation after generation. There is something about this prayer that is so true to your nature and to mine. Let us deal with it now. Let us enable it to speak to our condition. Aye, to begin with, we want a God who will listen to us. We want a god who will bend his ear. That is one reason why some people turn to religion -- they want to be in with the super-natural; they want to be on good speaking terms with the one who is power, the one who made . They want to be able to tax the resources of the infinite and the eternal. This prayer tells us so much about you and me. Give me a God to whom I can pray, who will listen, who will hear my prayer.

I could hardly believe that is true. Think of it -- frail, human creatures as we are. We can call God by his name. And what is more, he will stop to listen. (stoop?) Ah, that word that comes to us from the Latin is even more vivid than that. Lord, We beseech thee, give ear to our prayers, give ear to our prayers. It means, God, stoop over; God, lean in my direction; God, accommodate yourself to me. Who doesn't want a God like that, a God who stoops and a God who bends, a God who accommodates himself? We shout our Amen when we make a prayer like that, but, beloved, the God who stoops and the God who accommodates himself doesn't do it simply for our satisfaction. He does it because he is God, and he does it because that is the nature of all that he is. And when he stoops and when he accommodates himself to our condition he does it only that when he comes to us he may be able to give to us what we need most and what may be able to come to us only by the hand and

and the heart of God.

The people who prayed that prayer knew that, and they knew that they were in need of a God like that, and they were in need of a God who would show them the way, brighten their path, and illuminate their souls. So when they prayed, they asked God to do that very thing. But I am warning you, my friends, don't you dare pray this prayer unless you think you are ready for the consequences. For the God who stoops and the God who accommodates himself to man, and who by his gracious visitation comes to our hearts, is the God who once he comes will show us up. And do you know something? I honestly believe that is one reason why some people deliberately refuse to come to Jesus Christ. They don't want to be shown up. They don't want to be in the presence of someone who makes them feel exactly what they are, a disobedient, a spoiled and a sinful child of God.

One of the very things about our generation is that we are suffering from the teachings of another generation. It is a promulgation by certain people who sat in high places and certain institutions of learning who wanted us to believe that man is basically a good person, and that any teaching that the Church may offer that man is by nature sinful is so much "tommy-rot". Let him have his halo without asking. (?) Day after day in every way he is always going to be better and better. It is in the cards; it is bound to be that way.

Maybe that is one reason why the world is exactly as it is -- because men have been taught to believe that they are half-decent and quite all right. And that is one reason why I submit to you this morning how many people may not come to Jesus Christ because they are completely satisfied with themselves as they are, and they have no desire to see themselves in any other light. But not so these people at the beginning; not so these members of the early Christian church. They were realistic enough to know that they needed a God who would listen to eh them, and a God who would love them to the extent that when he came, he would give them light and they were tired of the darkness of their sins; they were tired of groping around in the blackness of the dark night of the soul. Now give me a God who will

shed a ray of light upon my soul. And when Jesus Christ comes into a man's heart, that is exactly what he does -- he brings a light by which we see our sins.

Long before I ever came to Saint Luke Church in Silver Spring I heard the beloved Pastor Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation, Oscar Blackwelder speak to a handful of ^{us} students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg. I have forgotten what he was telling us generally, but I do remember one specific illustration. He was telling us on occasion why he would go out and look at the Supreme Court Building just around the corner from his church, and on almost any given day it was a magnificent monument that would glisten and appeared to be so light and so clean. But, said Pastor Blackwelder, it was an entirely different story when God would allow freshly fallen snow to blanket the earth, snow that would come clean from the heavens above. Then what a contrast -- the snow to the otherwise rather clean-looking Supreme Court Building. Well the parable -- the significance when God visits us, when God blankets us with his clean love and his clean mercy and his clean truth, how dark we appear.

But these people of the early Church were willing to face a Christ like that if only he would come. That is what they needed, to be told that they were sinners, to be told that they were trying to live their lives without God. Mark you, they were smart enough to know those things without having to go to a psychiatrist! Lord, we beseech Thee, give ear to our prayer, enlighten the darkness of our hearts. For that is the seat of man's misery. He is by nature sinful. So Jesus Christ came. The prayers have been heard and Christ comes for his gracious visitation.

But wouldn't it be a terrible thing if that is all that he did, showed us that we were sinners? Just by standing alongside of us, without uttering a single word, just to find our life alongside of Jesus Christ. Life needs no argument; truth needs no defense. Its rays are always self-revealing. But wouldn't that be a terrible thing if that should be all that would happen when Jesus Christ comes

to your life and to mine, if he simply casts light upon our sins? But you know the other side of the story, don't you? The enlightening Christ comes not only to show us our sins, but above all ^{else} ~~essie~~, the enlightening Christ comes to show us the lines of love upon the face of God. Men never really knew what God looked like until Jesus Christ came, and that is true today. Men really do not know what God is like until through the eyes of Jesus Christ they discern the lines of love upon the face of God. That is the wonderful thing about the Christmas story. That is why in the creed, Light of light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. The enlightening Christ comes to show us what we are and also to show us what God is.

I don't know what you do with these prayers after you have heard them on Sunday. I don't know what happens after you read them on the "Messenger" cover when it comes to you -- the prayer that becomes the basis for the Sunday sermon, but I have a suggestion for you. Why don't you pray it daily?

Lord, we beseech Thee, give ear to our prayers, enlighten the darkness of our hearts by thy gracious visitation. It may be, my friend, the very thing that you need most. Honestly, now, it isn't too difficult for us to see the sins of other people. It isn't too difficult for us to catalog the vices (?) that characterize the lives of our friends and our neighbors. But to be able to see the blackness in my own heart? We who sometimes think ourselves lily-white, or if not lily-white, perhaps a delicate shade of grey as over against the blackness of my friend. The prayer we may need most to pray is that Jesus Christ should come into my heart and show me as I am.

With all the eagerness that becomes a young man who comes out to a parish fresh from the theological seminary, so I went to my first parish, completely imbued -- it seems to me -- with the things of the kingdom of God and how they ought to be done. And I shall recall, I hope to my dying day, how it became my responsibility to take a particular person to task. That isn't why I want to recall this. I want to recall it because what I am about to tell you is more significant. In the sense that I had developed it (?), it always had seemed to me that that person was to

blame. When one night when we saw the thing through and tried to resolve it

"We must also tell you that you are a part of the picture, too. Did it ever occur to you -- and they said it as warmheartedly (?) as they could -- that by your failing to do this, you have not helped the situation at all?" I frankly confess to you, it had never occurred to me, you see, that I could have been wrong. I share the parable with you just for what it may be worth.

It is the most difficult thing in the world to name our own sins and to discover the blackness in our own heart. If there is any merit at all in the confessional in the Roman Church, it seems to me it would come when the priest waits for the penitent to name -- to name his own sins, to search his own heart, to catalog for himself his vices.

Lord, we beseech thee, give ear to our prayers, lighten the darkness of our hearts by thy gracious visitation. As your shepherd, and as the bishop of your souls, I most heartily recommend this prayer for your personal use, because I have a suspicion that most of us spend too much time living our lives in the shadow of ourselves.

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Sunday, December 23, 1956

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This sermon, entitled "The Redeeming Christ", is the last in the series especially prepared for this pulpit during this Advent-tide. The general theme for these sermons during Advent has been "The Coming Christ", and each sermon has been based ^(upon) on the particular prayer for the Sundays in Advent.

Hear again the prayer that the Church has been using on the Fourth Sunday in Advent down through the centuries: Stir up, O Lord, we beseech thee, thy power, and come, and with great might succor us, that by the help of thy grace whatsoever is hindered by our sins may be speedily accomplished through Thy mercy and through Thy satisfaction.

You may remember what I have told you each Sunday that I have come to this pulpit during Advent, that when the Church was young and the people came together to pray, even before the service was officially started they would have the prayer session, the period when they in their own way, each man would mark the path that leads to the throne of grace, and he would pray. Then at the end of that period the presiding officer would get those prayers together, as much as to say, O God, This is what you have been hearing; this is what these people have been telling you; this is the prayer of prayers that we now make. That is what happened when the church was young.

I have come here this morning to raise a particular question for you. I have not come to tell you what the Church did in those early years. I have come now to raise this question: Suppose by some peculiar faculty I would have been given spiritual perception as your shepherd and pastor this morning to hear the kind of prayers that you have been praying as this service progresses. What would I have said to God in your behalf? That is one reason why you come to church a bit early, isn't it? That in the quiet period before the service begins you, too, may pray. You, too, each in his own way can mark the path that leads directly to the heart of the Lord. Isn't that why we come a bit early, that in the tradition of the early church we should have a pre-session, a period for praying?

Now suppose by some strange faculty I could have been standing by your side, each one of you, and now at this certain period in our worship, I would say, "Dear God, You have heard them, haven't you? This is what they have been praying about." Could I, as the presiding officer of old, gather all of your petitions together and make one prayer, and in your behalf say, "God, Did you hear them? They were asking you to forgive their sins. God, This morning when they came to this church, every last one of them, when they were talking with you, when they were making their prayers, they were all talking about the sins that they wanted forgiven, and what is more, they were all telling you that it is only by your grace, it is only as you shall come to them in Christ Jesus, that they know that their sins will be forgiven." Would I have understood your prayers aright? Would I have been telling God the very thing that you were talking about yourselves? Is that what you would have been whispering into the very ear of God -- God, forgive my sin; God, forgive my sin; God, through Jesus Christ come to me? Is that what is uppermost in your minds, the need for the entire forgiveness of your every sin?

Beloved, each year as I come to the people on the last Sunday in Advent, I have a strange emotional reaction. I remember what the Gospel lesson is for the day. It is from the chapter in John when John is telling the people who came to see him, and to hear him, they were completely astounded by his personality. They had never seen his kind before. And John says to them -- as much as to say, Well, if you are excited about me, if you think I am wonderful, let me tell you something. There stands one in your midst whom ye know not, whose shoes latchet I am not worthy to unloose. That telling phrase from John strikes deeply into my heart as I feel it should strike deeply into your heart. If the Christ should come again and stand in your midst, would you recognize Him? We who tell God he should visit the earth, we who tell God we need his help, when he comes will you be any better off than they were, should he come and stand by your side as the unrecognized one. I am always troubled when I walk (?) with the people during Advent, people who are telling God that they want Jesus Christ to come again, and I say to myself, If he should come again, would they ^{recognize} ~~recognize~~ him, would they recognize him?

Some few years back that dream came to me, a dream I suppose that every pastor cherishes - if only someday he could walk where Jesus walked -- and so I went to Palestine and I went up and down the shores of the Mediterranean and

that sacred spot in the land that is called "holy". And I had peculiar reactions, and I had one that seemed to plague me wherever I went when I was reminded of the fact that Jesus had been here, and I said to myself, But suppose I would have been here when He came -- would I have recognized Him, would I have known Him? Would I have called Him by name? Would I, as some of them did, put my reverently to my lips and whisper the name of God? This is the way we it: He is coming; he is coming; He is coming soon.

But this Christ who is coming, when he comes again will you recognize Him? Will you know Him as he is? Oh, I can give you the answer to that question if you will let me first raise another question.

For what kind of Christ do you look? What kind of Christ do you want? The early Church had an answer to that question. They said, we want God to come to us for only one purpose. We want him to come so that we shall have our sins forgiven. We want a redeemer. We want the saviour of mankind. There were some who when Jesus came said, That is the kind of Messiah we want, and when he came they called him, Lord and Master and Saviour. But for the most part there were people who were not looking for that kind of Messiah. They wanted someone riding on horseback, a great (?) charger who would establish the kindg kingdom of this world. But Jesus Christ did not appear very much like a dictator or a conqueror of the world. And so they didn't call him Lord; they didn't call him Saint. So I say to you this morning, you who look for the coming of the Christ, for what kind of Christ do you look?

It is an exceedingly profitable thing to look at Christ through the eyes of God. The scriptures put it perfectly. For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. That can be interpreted as this: God says, I am sending Christ that he shall be your redeemer. The coming Christ is the redeeming Christ, for so God opens the gates of Heaven and visits the earth.

George Arthur Buttrick, in that very profitable (?) book of ^{his} ~~me~~, "Christ and Man's Dilemma", tells us about the anarchist, son (?) of a pagan, yet with some type of respect for religion who wandered into the Catholic church, Notre Dame in Paris. He was struck as he heard the choir chant *Angus Dei*, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And the anarchist was heard to exclaim, O God, What a dream! that he realized, for in the hearts and souls of some people this is the cherished dream, that the Lamb of God should come and when He comes, he should come as the redeemer who takes away the sin of the world. That is the meaning of Christmas -- God coming as Redeemer, Saviour.

It is always a moment of great responsibility when the Pastor of a any church stands before a group of people, even as I stood a Sunday or two ago, and welcomed into this parish family that fine group of new members. The responsibility is ever upon his heart, even when he meets with them for instruction, for he recognizes that he is in duty bound to impress upon them as best he can that the only reason that should prompt any man to want to join a church should be that through it he might know again and again the saving grace of Jesus Christ. I have little patience with people who say to their son or their daughter, Make sure to join such and such a church because you will find in it decent and respectable people. The Church should be saintly with decent and respectable people. But that isn't any reason why a man should join that church, no more than it should be a reason for any man to come to Jesus Christ, for when Jesus Christ came into the world he did not come just because he wanted to make people decent. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he did not come just because he wanted to make people respect him. People can become decent and respectable without Jesus Christ. A man doesn't have to become a Christian to stay out of jail. A man doesn't have to become a Christian in order to keep the Ten Commandments. A man doesn't have to become a Christian to be called a moral . Jesus Christ did not come into the world just to make people decent and respectable. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from their sins. That is an entirely different thing than decency and respectability per se.

As every pastor, I view with considerable alarm the superficial aspects that characterize the "Return to Religion", as it is called. There are those who take a measure of pride in recognizing that there are more people on church rolls now, even percentage-wise, than at any other time in the history of the American people. But I am in duty-bound to ask the question, Why? If Christianity is fast becoming identified with our culture and people become members of the church just as they become members of any other society for the social betterment of mankind, and let off at that point, then I cannot become excited about the so-called Return to Religion. If people become members of the church in our day as they did not become members before, because the Christian church is becoming acquainted (?) with the American scene, where sometimes they identify Christianity with democracy, the American scheme of life, then I most certainly cannot become excited with the so-called Return to Religion. But if people turn to Jesus Christ because they know they are sinners, if they turn to Jesus Christ because they know they cannot be redeemed by any other one, then I shall fall upon my knees and thank God for any man that takes any path that brings him to that kind of altar.

And I must also submit to you likewise that I have little patience with people who turn to Jesus Christ just because they want peace of mind. If I understand the Christ who came to that manger (?) throne, he did not come just because he wanted to give people peace of mind. In fact, he went to some people and he stood in almost accounting fashion, staring into the very depth of their souls in order that he should disturb -- shake them from their complacency, make them terribly dissatisfied with their sinful lives. And there are some people to whom Jesus Christ did not come to keep peace of mind, but rather that they might toss restlessly on their bed of night and let all of their sins parade before them, because that was the very thing they were failing to do -- to call their sins by name.

Beloved, I tell you with all the ardor that my soul can muster, when God sent Jesus Christ into the world, he sent him not just because he wanted people to become decent, not just because he wanted them to become respectable, not just because

he wanted them to have peace of mind. Jesus Christ came into the world because God could give to Jesus Christ what the world could not receive in any other way, the _____ salvation.

Now, I will tell you this, once a man is penitent, then he will have peace of mind. Peace of mind comes as a result of the penitent who has received pardon at the hand of Jesus Christ. Peace of mind is never an end in itself. It comes once a man knows that he has been forgiven. A man may become decent and respectable and keep the law and keep the Ten Commandments a lot easier once he knows himself forgiven by Jesus Christ. All of what we sometimes look upon as the standards of decency and order that we can see may come to a man only after he has been at right with God. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. The redeeming Christ is the Christ of God. When God ^{sees} ~~saw~~ fit to give Christ to this world, he will give Christ because the world needs what only he can give. Men cannot save themselves. I will Save them; I will do it.

And that is the meaning of Christmas, my friends. God stooping to the earth; God taking you by the hand; God saying, I want to be in your heart, and I am going to come myself, if you will only open the door.

In the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York City, there are boys and girls who have been deaf from birth, but they are being taught to hear. Do you know how they do it? The teacher, a dedicated soul, stoops to the level of the child. She sits on a chair low enough to bring her to where the child is. And then she takes the child's hand and places the child's fingers upon her own lips and her teeth and her cheek. And as she says the word, the child feels and ^{through} ~~though~~ the feeling ^{may} ~~may~~ learn to hear, and eventually, after one struggle after another, may speak the word. But it happens only after the teacher stoops and touches the child where the child is. That is the meaning of Christmas. God stoops from heaven to come to us where we are and offers us the thing that we need most -- the forgiveness of our sins.

Beloved, I do not know what kind of a Christ you may be looking for. I haven't been here long enough to probe the depth of every man's soul with pastoral responsibil-

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